$3.75
(CANADA $4.75)

FIRST THINGS

AUGUST/
SEPTEMBER 2001
NUMBER 115

ALAN JACOBS

Auden and the Limits of Poetry

JAMES NUECHTERLEIN

The Last Liberal

A. J. CONYERS

Rescuing Tolerance

RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS

The End of Endings

AVERY CARDINAL DULLES AND HIS CRITICS:
AN EXCHANGE ON CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

ALSO: *Will All Be Saved?*

Robert P. George et al. on the Nature of Law • Andrew J. Bacevich on The Vietnam Wars • Edward T. Oakes • James Nuechterlein Theodore Forstmann • William Edgar • Walter D. Connor Michael L. Raposa • Brian E. Daley • Richard M. Doerflinger

08>
73361 64655 2

RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS

THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

GREAT STORIES, GREAT LITERATURE

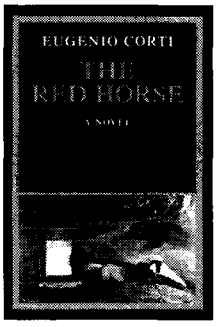
THE SHADOW OF HIS WINGS

Fr. Gereon Goldmann

The astonishing true story of the harrowing experiences of a young German seminarian drafted into Hitler's dreaded SS during World War II. Without betraying his Christian ideals, against all odds, and in the face of Evil, Goldmann was able to complete his priestly training, be ordained, and, facing certain death if caught, he miraculously ministered secretly to German soldiers and innocent civilian victims caught up in the horrors of war. *Illustrated*

350 pages, Sewn Softcover, $14.95

THE RED HORSE



Eugenio Corti

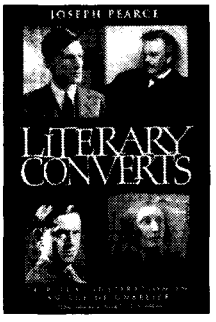
An acclaimed European best-seller, this epic historical novel about World War II and after, written from Corti's personal experiences as an Italian Freedom Fighter, is a detailed, profoundly moving account of the war, and the effects the war had on families in his hometown in Italy. A compelling story of deep spiritual faith and hope in a world reduced to barbarism and cruelty.

1000 pages, Sewn Hardcover, $29.95

"A powerful and moving tale of World War II. . . a landmark event."

— **Carlo D'Este**, Author, *Patton: A Genius for War*

LITERARY CONVERTS



Joseph Pearce

A profound biographical exploration into the spiritual lives of some of the greatest writers in the English language: Oscar Wilde, Evelyn Waugh, C.S. Lewis, Malcolm Muggeridge, Graham Greene, Edith Sitwell, Ronald Knox, Hilaire Belloc, G.K. Chesterton, Dorothy Sayers, T.S. Eliot, J.R.R. Tolkien, and more. *Literary Converts* touches on some of the most important questions of the twentieth century.

465 pages, Sewn Hardcover, $24.95

JOAN OF ARC

Mark Twain

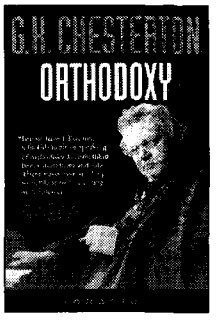
An utterly fascinating and historically accurate account of the incredible story of Joan of Arc told by America's greatest storyteller. Twain spent 12 years of research on the book and considered it his most important and best work.

"I like *Joan of Arc* best of all my books; and it is the best, I know it perfectly well. It furnished me seven times the pleasure of any of the others."

— **Mark Twain**

455 pages, Sewn Softcover, $14.95

ORTHODOXY



G.K. Chesterton

Among Chesterton's many works, *Orthodoxy* stands out as the most scintillating synthesis of his philosophy and deeply religious faith. In his inimitable, soaring prose, Chesterton tells of his earth-shaking personal discovery that orthodoxy is the only satisfactory answer to the mystery of life. A model Christian apologetic for today's readers.

170 pages, Sewn Softcover, $11.95

ignatius press

P.O. Box 1339, Ft. Collins, CO 80524

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Qty		Total
____	**Literary Converts** (24.95)	_____
____	**Joan of Arc** (14.95)	_____
____	**The Red Horse** (29.95)	_____
____	**The Shadow of His Wings** (14.95)	_____
____	**Orthodoxy** (11.95)	_____
____	**All 5 Books** - $68.00 (Reg. $97.00)	_____
	Shipping/Handling $2.00 per book	_____
	Total Enclosed	_____

Order online at www.ignatius.com

Order Toll-Free with Credit Card 1-800-651-1531 **GSL-FTH**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FIRST THINGS

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2001 • Number 115

CORRESPONDENCE 2 The nature of law; three meanings of "Constantinian arrangement"; misrepresentation?; priestesses; for the record

AN EXCHANGE 7 Avery Cardinal Dulles and His Critics

THIS TIME 17 *James Nuechterlein* Turn Out the Lights?

OPINION 19 *Andrew J. Bacevich* The Vietnam Wars

21 *Theodore Forstmann* Putting Parents in Charge

24 *William Edgar* The Passing of R. J. Rushdoony

ARTICLES 26 *Alan Jacobs* Auden and the Limits of Poetry

33 *James Nuechterlein* The Last Liberal

43 *A. J. Conyers* Rescuing Tolerance

47 *Richard John Neuhaus* The End of Endings

BOOKS 57

Edward T. Oakes Greek Ways: How the Greeks Created Western Civilization by Bruce Thornton

Walter D. Connor Why Angels Fall: A Journey Through Orthodox Europe from Byzantium to Kosovo by Victoria Clark

Michael L. Raposa The Divided Self of William James by Richard M. Gale

Brian E. Daley Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism by Daniel Boyarin

Richard M. Doerflinger Culture of Death: The Assault on Medical Ethics in America by Wesley Smith . . . *and* Briefly Noted

THE PUBLIC SQUARE 77 A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life
Richard John Neuhaus
This Month: Will All Be Saved?, *etc.*
Poetry by *Sally Thomas* (32), *Valerie Wohlfeld* (42), *Hal Reidl* (56)

Editor-in-Chief: *Richard John Neuhaus*
Editor: *James Nuechterlein*
Associate Editor: *Damon Linker*
Managing Editor: *Alicia Mosier*
Editorial Assistant: *Matthew Rose*
Poetry Editor: *J. Bottum*
Publisher: *Institute on Religion and Public Life*
Publishing Service: *Publishing Management Associates*

First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life (ISSN #1047-5141) is published monthly (except for combined issues June/July and August/September) for $29 per year ($14.97 for students) by The Institute on Religion and Public Life, 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, NY 10010. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY and additional mailing office. POSTMASTER: send address changes to First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life, P.O. Box 3000, Dept. FT, Denville, NJ 07834. **Editorial Offices:** The Institute on Religion and Public Life, 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, NY 10010. **Editorial Phone:** (212) 627-1985. **Email:** ft@firstthings.com. **Website:** http://www.firstthings.com. **Advertising Offices:** 129 Phelps Avenue, Suite 312, Rockford, IL 61108. **Advertising Phone:** (815) 398-8569. **Email:** firstthingsadsales@pma-inc.net. **Subscription Department:** P.O. Box 3000, Dept. FT. Denville, NJ 07834. **Subscription Phone:** 1-877-905-9920. **Email:** subscriberservices@pma-inc.net. Unsolicited material cannot be returned unless accompanied by sufficient return postage. Newsstand distribution by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., One Media Way, 12406 Rt. 250, Milan, OH 44846.

Copyright © 2001 by the Institute on Religion and Public Life. All rights reserved. Produced in the USA.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FIRST THINGS

FIRST THINGS is published by Religion and Public Life, an interreligious, nonpartisan research and education institute whose purpose is to advance a religiously informed public philosophy for the ordering of society.

EDITORIAL BOARD

Midge Decter
Mary Ann Glendon
Stanley Hauerwas
Gilbert Meilaender
David Novak
Michael Novak
George Weigel

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

Hadley Arkes
Stephen M. Barr
James Burtchaell
David Dalin
Thomas Derr
Jean Bethke Elshtain
James Finn
Ernest Fortin
Elizabeth Fox-Genovese
Suzanne Garment
Robert George
Carl F. H. Henry
Russell Hittinger
Leonid Kishkovsky
Glenn Loury
George Marsden
Robert Louis Wilken

Correspondence

The Nature of Law

Robert P. George's "What is Law? A Century of Arguments" (April) will be a wonderful addition to my philosophy of law course this fall, but it accepts too easily H. L. A. Hart's positivist desire for a "conceptual separation" between morality and law. Contrary to the thrust of Professor George's piece, such a separation is not merely "descriptive" or "methodological." It is also *institutional* and thus has important practical effects. Let me mention a few.

Hart is not a complete skeptic, as Prof. George points out. He agrees that we may have moral duties not to enact or obey unjust laws. But for him those laws remain "valid though illicit," to use the terminology of another tradition. In Hart's own terms, morality imposes duties but not disabilities on the legal order, thus granting that order a large measure of institutional autonomy—just as the traditional duties of international law leave intact the domestic validity of laws that violate those duties.

For example, even assuming that *Roe v. Wade* unjustly discriminates against unborn children, this argument would count merely as a moral objection for Hart and would thus be rightly excluded from the courtroom during a trial, say, of nonviolent rescuers at an abortion clinic. And, of course, the argument forms no basis for appeal of a conviction.

By contrast, Pope John Paul II reiterated a traditional natural law thesis in *Evangelium Vitae* when he stated that "a law which violates an innocent person's natural right to life is unjust and, as such, is not valid as a law." Since, in this view, *Roe* is invalid, unborn children continue to enjoy legal protection under U.S. law. And a rescuer can make an argument in court that he could trespass if necessary to save their lives. If the judge refuses to listen, the defendant has a legal right to appeal. In the same way, today's international human rights activists wish individuals to be legally able to rely directly on supranational norms, with courts treating as invalid all contrary domestic norms.

Of course, if the judges are Hartians, the Johnpaulinian rescuers will still end up in jail. Even so, their and their supporters' morale will be strengthened by the knowledge that they were put there illegally as well as immorally. In order to see fully the practical effects of the Pope's approach, however, we should ask what would happen if our judges also came to agree that a truly unjust decision of the Supreme Court is not valid.

Richard Stith
Valparaiso University Law School
Valparaiso, Indiana

Robert P. George offers a valuable and clearheaded discussion of a century's exploration of the nature of law. I have no significant disagreements with his essay, and would offer only these points by way of elaboration and response.

Many (not all) of the debates between "positivists" and "natural lawyers" are largely semantic; very little turns on them. Hart, for example, sought to sort out the conditions under which law counts as such, without saying that we have reason to follow or accept whatever counts as law. In separating the question of what law is from the question of what law ought to be, Hart aimed, in fact, to facilitate moral criticism of the law.

Many people, including Lon Fuller, seem to have been alarmed that extremely unjust law could, on Hart's view, count as law. But if we are permitted to criticize and even to disobey extremely unjust law, why is it important to deny that unjust law is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

law? This seems to be mostly a rhetorical question. I admire Professor George's nicely put suggestion that "just positive law is derived from the natural law"; he rightly suggests that we distinguish between just positive law and law, and treat the latter as such even if we reject it in principle.

But Lon Fuller does have a interesting, limited response, and that response is worth some attention here. Fuller argues that law as such has its own "internal morality," and that a Nazi system (for example) fails to qualify as law because it does not comport with that internal morality. Fuller urges that a legal system requires, among other things, laws a) that are clear and specific rather than vague and general; b) that are not contradictory, so that citizens can conform their behavior to them; c) that are not retroactive; and d) that operate in the world as they do on the books. Fuller's great contribution was to show that systems of fascism and communism are unlikely to qualify as "law," not because the systems are unjust (though of course they are), but because they do not comply with the internal morality that any legal system must satisfy. For Fuller, law's internal morality is "thin"; but it is nonetheless extremely important. I would be much interested in hearing Prof. George's comments on Fuller's thinking here.

It seems to me that Prof. George underplays Ronald Dworkin's most important contribution, which involves not his controversial views about constitutional law but his claims about "what the law is." Dworkin says (to oversimplify a complex set of claims) that any statement about what the law is has a backward-looking dimension, but also embeds a judgment of principle. For Dworkin, a statement that "the law is X" is an effort to make "the best constructive sense" out of past legal events. We have to "fit" the past, rather than ignore it. On Dworkin's view, any statement about the content of law must be based on an acknowledgment of a duty of fidelity to the past. At the same time, there may be several interpretations that "fit," and in the event that we can fit the past in multiple ways, we inevitably try to make the best sense out of it, rather than nonsense. For example, it would be possible to criticize *Roe v. Wade* on the ground that it does not fit with preexisting legal materials; it would also be possible to criticize *Roe v. Wade* on the ground that even if it fits with those materials, it does not make sense out of them. I think that Dworkin is making an important contribution here, one with which positivists do not disagree, and one with which natural lawyers should (it seems to me) have no complaint. Dworkin is not really answering Hart's question: What is law? Instead he is asking: When people interpret the law, what are they doing? To the extent that Dworkin is right, he is showing some of the reasons why people disagree about legal issues, including large constitutional issues. They disagree about the issue of fit. And they disagree about what makes best sense of the past.

This seems to me to illuminate many of our current controversies about the content of law. Dworkin also raises questions for Oliver Wendell Holmes, who is, in *The Path of the Law*, too much of a realist (for reasons given by Prof. George). If economics is not the only future for law (and it is not), this is because economics doesn't always fit with past legal practice, and doesn't always make sense of it. As a judge, by the way, Holmes paid far too little attention to fit—a problem also for Justices William O. Douglas and Antonin Scalia, both of whom, for all their differences, have the vice of liking to strike out on paths not of the law but of their own.

An interesting feature of Fuller's "thin" account of law's internal morality is that diverse people can unite around it. Liberals and conservatives, Christians and Jews, utilitarians and Kantians, fundamentalists and atheists, environmentalists and property rights enthusiasts—all these can agree that a legal system worthy of the name must comply with Fuller's requirements. There is a large lesson here, one that has played a significant but underappreciated role in the last century's arguments about the nature of law.

Both in legislation and in adjudication, a well-functioning legal system attempts to create and to benefit from "incompletely theorized agreements"—agreements on the existence and content of law amidst disagreements about what theoretical position ultimately justifies that existence and that content. People who disagree about a great deal can, for example, support protection of political dissent, and many provisions of the Clean Air Act command a consensus from an exceptionally diverse array of people. I am not sure that we can, or that we should, seek an incompletely theorized agreement on Prof. George's large question: What is law? And in some cases, theoretical disputes will break out and cannot be bracketed when we seek to know what the law is. (Dworkin is helpful in explaining why this is so.) But it does seem clear that in understanding the social functions of law, and its uneasy relationship to morality, we will be able to make progress if we emphasize the astonishing extent to which diverse people, for all their disagreements, are often able to agree on what counts as law, and even on the law's justice. For a society with high aspirations, this is not everything, of course; but it is a precious historical achievement.

Cass Sunstein
University of Chicago Law School
Chicago, Illinois

The question "what is law?" has been treated in the last two centuries as if it were an empirical question, one of analysis and description of legal practice. If one were to ask "what is *the* law?"—meaning what is the applicable law on any given subject in such-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and-such jurisdiction?—then an empirical approach is not inappropriate. In this sense it *does* involve, as Oliver Wendell Holmes argued, a prediction of the future behavior of judges and juries given certain underlying facts about them and the context (including the normative context) in which they operate. However, the question "what is law?" (sans the definite article) should not be treated empirically as if it were merely a matter of description. Instead, it should be treated as a normative question: What *should* the law be if properly applied in practice? In other words, what is the ideal toward which its practitioners should strive?—which is the question that I believe philosophers such as Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas attempted to address.

Laws are rules of conduct, with remedies and sanctions attached, based partly on the morality of interpersonal relations extant in society and governing the just resolution of disputes and partly on policy considerations involving the best interests of *all* members of the polity, whether they are involved in the dispute or not. Because of this dual character of law and the interests it must satisfy, law can never be *entirely* moral if the latter, in some situations, is to be preferred over the former. An example would be the case, recently posed, in which still-surviving U.S. veterans of World War II captured and enslaved to work in war industries by the Japanese are claiming reparations from the present Japanese government for their unlawful forced labor and suffering. Their claim, however, must be barred by law because their government—which indisputably had a legal right to act as their representative in dealings with foreign governments and their peoples—explicitly waived such claims in its peace treaty with the Japanese government in the 1950s. A moral argument could certainly be made why this obligation should not be discharged by this act of two governments, especially when the behavior of one of them (the U.S. negotiators) was done in secrecy or obscurity, without the knowledge or consent of those most directly affected by that particular provision. However, the policy considerations concerning international treaties and their reliability override any such moral objections in this instance. This does not mean that law should not strive to arrive at the most just result possible for those immediately involved in any injustice. (Perhaps the U.S. government should compensate those ex-POWs for the claims it so carelessly negotiated away.) It is true, nevertheless, that while law and morality are not perfectly congruent, it is just as untrue, as the legal positivists often argued, that they are totally separate realms.

Another essential feature of law in the normative sense and what may distinguish it from other rules is that it must have an authoritative source. An authoritative source these days—once it was custom, the Church, or the King—is a popular legislature, expressing (in theory, at least) the will of the people governed and, in some places, the will of God. Except in Anglo-American common law (and perhaps not even there, again, *in theory*), an authoritative source of law is not, or should not be, the judge who applies the law. The judge may interpret the law to fit the case before him, but the law he chooses to apply should come from an authoritative and identifiable source other than himself or other judges. Where this aspect of law is not observed, there is no "rule of law"; indeed, there is no "law" at all.

I do not know whether Robert P. George would agree with these points, but I highlight them because I think they are fundamental to any discussion of what "law" is and are often overlooked in discussions of the subject.

Barton L. Ingraham
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Robert P. George replies:

Thanks to all three correspondents for exceptionally thoughtful letters. I am flattered by the kind words of Professors Stith and Sunstein—scholars of high distinction from whose writings I have over the years greatly benefited.

Professor Stith's interpretation of Herbert Hart's jurisprudence is hardly idiosyncratic. No less a figure than Ronald Dworkin, Hart's successor as Professor of Jurisprudence at Oxford, reads Hart in roughly the way Prof. Stith reads him. Still, I have never been persuaded that this interpretation is correct. Like John Finnis and Joseph Raz—Hart's greatest students (and, as it happens, my teachers)—I think that Hart's method and objective in jurisprudence did not include any proposal to resolve questions of judicial obligation of the sort Prof. Stith (and Dworkin) impute to him.

What Finnis once wrote in reference to Dworkin's famous critique of Hart applies, I believe, with equal force to what Prof. Stith says in contrasting what he takes to be Hart's position with that of John Paul II:

> [Dworkin's] debate with "positivists" such as Hart . . . miscarries, because he fails to acknowledge that their theoretical interest is not, like his, to identify a fundamental "test for law" in order to identify (even in the most disputed "hard" cases) where a judge's legal (moral and political) duty really lies, in a given community at a given time. Rather, their interest is in describing what is treated (i.e., accepted and effective) as law in a given community at a given time, and in generating concepts that will allow such descriptions to be clear and explanatory, but without intent to offer solutions . . . to questions disputed among competent lawyers.

It is not that Prof. Stith's (or Dworkin's) questions (or the questions to which the Pope does indeed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

propose answers) are uninteresting or unimportant. It is simply that they are not questions Hart sought to resolve. He was interested in a different set of questions.

Consider Prof. Stith's example of a judge facing the question of whether to exclude an argument about the injustice of *Roe v. Wade* in a trial of nonviolent rescuers at an abortion clinic. A sound interpretation of Hart's writings would, I believe, yield the conclusion that his concept of law does not by itself dictate a decision one way or the other. We can (and Hart could) envisage a legal system in which the accepted understanding of judicial duty *includes* a prerogative or even obligation of the judge to admit the argument; and, of course, we can (and Hart could) envisage a legal system in which a contrary understanding prevails. Indeed, it is possible to envisage a legal system in which a dispute exists among competent lawyers acting in good faith as to whether the proper course is for the judge to exclude the argument or admit it. What Hart proposed to do, and largely succeeded in doing, was to develop conceptual tools to make possible a truly refined ("explanatory") and accurate description of the actual functioning of the legal system *in each case*. Contrary to what Prof. Stith supposes, Hart was not interested in fashioning a concept (or adumbrating a theory) of law under which no judge in any legal system could ever legitimately say, as a matter of law, that the argument was admissible.

I agree with Prof. Sunstein that many of the debates between "positivists" and "natural lawyers" are, for all their fury, largely semantic. I also agree that Lon Fuller's response to Hart's "conceptual separation" thesis was not without merit. I have set forth a qualified defense of Fuller in a paper entitled "Free Choice, Practical Reason, and Fitness for the Rule of Law," which appeared in 1992 in *Social Discourse and Moral Judgment*, edited by Daniel Robinson. (I shall send a copy to Professor Sunstein and to anyone who requests one from FIRST THINGS.)

It is possible that Prof. Sunstein is correct in saying that my essay underplays Ronald Dworkin's most important contribution to jurisprudence. I have written so much (mostly by way of criticism) about Dworkin over the years that perhaps I am missing the forest for the trees. Prof. Sunstein's exposition of Dworkin's position on "what the law is" seems sound to me, though Dworkin's various statements of his position have not been free of ambiguities. What Dworkin says about the need to take into account what he calls "fit" with past legal events in evaluating possible interpretations of the law is reasonable, though the idea cannot be said to have originated with him. (He does, however, deserve credit for analyzing it in illuminating ways.)

The controversial and, to me, less persuasive aspect of Dworkin's thinking concerns the relationship of "fit" to *moral judgment* in legal interpretation. Over a period of some thirty-five years, Dworkin has vigorously insisted on this relationship and its importance in legal theory. Yet he has not satisfactorily explained either the relationship or its importance. What desperately needs explaining is how Dworkin proposes to overcome the apparent incommensurability of "fit," on the one hand, and substantive moral "soundness," on the other, as criteria of assessment in legal interpretation. (The problem Dworkin needs to face up to is lucidly explained by John Finnis in his essay "Natural Law and Legal Reasoning," in *Natural Law Theory: Contemporary Essays*, published under my editorship by Oxford University Press in 1992.)

Prof. Sunstein mentions the concept of "incompletely theorized agreements" which, in a variety of areas, well-functioning legal systems create and from which they derive important benefits. What he modestly omits saying is that he himself is responsible for identifying the concept and calling the attention of those of us working in the field of jurisprudence to its significance in understanding the social functions of law. I would particularly commend to readers his *Legal Reasoning and Political Conflict* (Oxford University Press, 1996).

I find much to agree with in Mr. Ingraham's comments, particularly his point about the importance for the "rule of law" of judicial respect for the distinction between legislating and adjudicating. Perhaps readers of FIRST THINGS are the last people on earth in need of reminding that in contemporary American judicial practice—particularly (though not exclusively) in the area of constitutional law—respect for this distinction has eroded. At the same time, it is worth noticing that the distinction itself will inevitably be fuzzy at the edges. Even the most conscientious and self-restrained judge will sometimes find that the application of legal rules to a set of facts will require of him the exercise of a measure of discretion. Neil MacCormick (another of Herbert Hart's outstanding students) refers to judicial discretion in these circumstances as a form of "interstitial law-making." Friends of the rule of law need find no scandal in this, except when willful or willfully self-deceived judges seize upon it as a pretext for the usurpation of properly legislative authority.

On Constantine and Constantinianism

In three recent issues of FIRST THINGS references have been made to Constantine or to the "Constantinian arrangement" in at least two different ways without any accompanying clarification. There is the "Constantinian arrangement," the defense of which Robert Louis Wilken wrote about in his essay "In Defense of Constantine" (April), which stems from Constantine himself, and was or became—depending upon one's historical point of view—Caesaropapism. That condition of church-state

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

relations has been typical in Eastern Europe, which goes far toward explaining how the Russian Orthodox Church could accommodate itself to the Soviet dictatorship. It manifests itself even today in such discrimination as the refusal to register the Salvation Army, as noted in the March "While We're At It." Caesaropapism is also the basis for the claim of England's Henry VIII to be the head of the Church in England.

Another "Constantinian arrangement" arose from the Donation of Constantine, a forgery (circa A.D. 800) in which the Emperor Constantine donated to Pope Sylvester I the primacy over the Eastern patriarchates and even offered him the empire. The latter offer Sylvester declined. The Donation was used as evidence for the Roman view of papal primacy. Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464) proved the Donation a forgery.

There is a third relationship that George Weigel ("Papacy and Power," February) calls the "Constantinian arrangement," but which, if I have understood him, is actually the reverse of Caesaropapism. He refers to the papal claims to temporalities. I am loath to take issue with so distinguished a person as Mr. Weigel, whose writings I enjoy and admire. I think, however, that the arrangement to which he refers might better be denominated "Hildebrandine" with respect to the controversy of the two swords during Hildebrand's papal reign as Gregory VII (1073-1085). After celebrating Passover the disciples said to Jesus, "Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough" (Luke 22:38). The papal interpretation of that passage from Gregory VII's time onward was that the two swords represent temporality and spirituality. The spiritual sword was to be wielded by the Church itself, and the temporal sword was to be wielded by civil powers on the Church's behalf. This theory may have reached its zenith when John of England became a vassal of the Pope and received England as a papal fief. In my opinion it would be more accurate to refer to "the evolution of a [post-Hildebrandine] papacy from Pius IX to John Paul II" rather than of a "post-Constantinian" papacy, as Mr. Weigel suggests.

Jeffrey Wilson
Street, Maryland

Misrepresentation?

In dismissing my foreword to Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger's *Many Religions—One Covenant* (Briefly Noted, April), David B. Hart manages to miss my point, or at least misrepresent it. My intention was not to convict Protestants of heresy. I wished, rather, to praise the Cardinal for moving Catholic theology beyond the anti-Protestant polemics and apologetics that have been its preoccupation since the sixteenth century. Defensive theology is sometimes necessary, but it is almost always a misshapen thing. In their obsession with Protestant-Catholic differences, some Catholic theologians have tended to linger too long on a few disputed points of doctrine.

Cardinal Ratzinger's return to what I call "classical Christianity" restores due proportion and harmony to all that is revealed in the word of God. I praise his work of restoration because I believe it lends itself to the most fruitful sort of ecumenism. Protestants and Catholics have much more in common than the fixations of the last five centuries would ever lead us to recognize.

Unless I'm mistaken, I'm standing in the same corner with the good Cardinal and Professor Hart—on this point, at least.

Scott W. Hahn
Professor of Scripture and Theology
Franciscan University of
Steubenville
Steubenville, Ohio

David B. Hart replies:
I regret giving offense to Professor Hahn, and I especially regret misrepresenting his views (if that is indeed what I have done), but my mistake was certainly one that was occasioned as much by the text in question as by my reading of it. As for the corner that he, I, and Cardinal Ratzinger allegedly occupy, Prof. Hahn may be right, though as an Orthodox Christian I really have no dog in this particular fight, and spend most of my time standing off in another corner altogether, bitterly complaining that no one reads Leontios of Byzantium anymore. In any event, I applaud Prof. Hahn's intentions in his preface—as he has elucidated them here—but I still deplore the language in which he chose to express them.

On Priestesses

Richard John Neuhaus (While We're At It, April) states that persons who use the term "priestesses" are generally opposed to the attempt by some Protestant denominations to ordain women. Father Neuhaus goes on to assert that the term is intended as a put-down. While the former statement may be true, the latter is not, at least not for all who use the term. Fr. Neuhaus mentions its use by Episcopalians and Lutherans. It is also used by Catholics, including myself (I am "guilty" of using the term in two Catholic publications in America, and one in the U.K.). For my own part, I certainly do not intend it as a put-down of any person, though perhaps of a practice which I believe to be an offense against God and the faith of the Apostles.

The term "priestess" is simply the correct grammatical term for a woman who takes priestly office in religious ceremonies. There were pagan priestesses in classical antiquity, as there are neo-pagan and New Age priestesses today. (I put the word into an Internet search engine and discovered over 4,500 websites of various ladies who call themselves priestesses, many offering to read your fortune for a reasonable fee.) If a woman really believes that the God of Judeo-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Christian faith calls her to the priestly office, there is no reason why she should shrink from being referred to—or from referring to herself—as a priestess. The fact that many take offense at the term indicates to me that perhaps their conscience is ill at ease with the office they have chosen to take upon themselves.

Fr. Neuhaus also notes (or rather quotes) a statement about the "overwhelming support among Americans for women as religious leaders"—a statement laden with the typical fuzzy thinking encouraged by the sociologists. "Religious leaders" are not necessarily the same as "priests," and all persons who support including women among the former are not necessarily doing the same concerning the latter. To paraphrase C. S. Lewis in his essay "Priestesses in the Church?" (highly recommended reading on this issue which can be found in *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*), women have, since Old Testament times, prophesied, led armies (e.g., Esther, Ruth, Judith, Joan of Arc), and founded religious communities. At least one (St. Catherine of Siena) has successfully chastised a pope, causing him to leave his residence at Avignon and return to Rome. However, not one of these outstanding women (not Ruth, Esther, Judith, Sts. Catherine, Clare, or Joan—or, for that matter, Mother Teresa) has sought to take upon herself the role of the priest. There is no record of any such attempt in the Old or New Testaments, the Didache, any other reliable record left by the early Church, or any major Christian community (Eastern or Western) for almost 2000 years, until the 1970s.

L. A. Carstens
North Hollywood, California

For the Record

It has come to my attention that I did not make it clear that a short section of my review of Peter Singer's *A Darwinian Left* (FT, November 2000) was inspired by Howard Kaye's critique of sociobiology in *The Social Meaning of Modern Biology* (1997). This was an oversight: Professor Kaye's book is excellent, and I am delighted to bring it to readers' attention.

Nancy Pearcey
The Discovery Institute
Seattle, Washington

Avery Cardinal Dulles and His Critics: An Exchange on Capital Punishment

Avery Cardinal Dulles carefully lays out the Catholic Church's traditional teaching on capital punishment ("Catholicism and Capital Punishment," April), but unfortunately neglects any serious engagement with the text of the Church's most authoritative articulation to date on the subject, viz., no. 2267 of the 1997 edition of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The text there indicates that something fundamentally new is happening in the Church's response to this thorny issue. Two novel points should be noted.

First, the *Catechism*'s analysis strictly ties the death penalty to a model of *self-defense*. Whereas the *Catechism*'s predecessor, the 1566 *Roman Catechism*, treats capital punishment under a subsection headed "exceptions" to the Fifth Commandment, and most systematic treatises, at least since Trent, follow Aquinas and treat it under the heading, "whether it is lawful to kill malefactors," no. 2267 places its treatment within a subsection entitled "legitimate defense" (*defensio legitima*). When Aquinas uses the related term "blameless defense" (*inculpata tutela*)—he never to my knowledge uses the term *defensio legitima*—he is not referring to a blameless act of capital punishment, but rather a blameless act of *self-defense*; and this self-defending act, if it results in the harm or death of the aggressor, must include neither as its end nor means the death or injury of the assailant. When the 1917 and 1983 Codes of Canon Law use the related term "legitimate defense" (*legitima tutela*), they, like Aquinas, are referring to legitimate killing in private acts of *self-defense*, implying the same limitations on intent. No. 2267 is clear as to the nature of a case falling under the designation "legitimate defense," namely, "cases in which the execution of the offender is an absolute necessity." But when the concept of "necessary defense" is found in theological literature prior to Vatican II in relation to questions of legitimate homicide, it is used almost exclusively to refer to the killing of aggressors by private persons in self-defense.

Finally, should there remain any doubt as to the text's meaning, no. 2267 refers to those who are rightly killed as "aggressors," not "criminals," "the condemned," "prisoners," and the like. An "aggressor" is one who attacks. To defend against an aggressor is to defend against one who is or soon will be "attacking." And the kind of defense no. 2267 refers to entails "rendering [the aggressor] . . . incapable of doing harm." This language is a red flag to anyone familiar with the Church's tradition of justifi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

able homicide. "Rendering aggressors incapable of causing harm" is classical terminology used to refer to the lawful killing of aggressors by private persons in self-defense.

Second, capital punishment, as well as all acts of "legitimate" killing, are subsumed under a model of "double-effect." No. 2263, the first in the subsection, introduces double-effect reasoning to show that not all actions which result in killing are intentional killing and forbidden by the Commandment; indeed, the teaching that controls the whole of the subsection is that what the Commandment excludes as murder is *intentional* killing. The subsection briefly departs from this motif in no. 2266 to introduce punishment's "primary purpose," i.e., redressing the disorder introduced by deliberate crime (i.e., retribution), but then implicitly returns to it in 2267, where a legitimate act of capital punishment (so called in the text) is defined, not in terms of "punishment" as specified in 2266, but rather in terms of "self-defense" as defined in sections 2263-2265.

The text insists that recourse to killing is legitimate if and only if the need to defend people's lives and safety against the attacks of an unjust aggressor can be met by no other means. According to the *Catechism*'s own definition of punishment, the act defined as *poena mortis* ("capital punishment") in no. 2267 *is not* in fact an act of punishment, but rather an act of collective self-defense on the community's behalf by the state. Perhaps the clearest indication of this is seen when we compare the treatment of the 1992 edition of the *Catechism* with the revised text of the 1997 edition. In 1992 the *Catechism* taught that the Church "has acknowledged as well-founded the right and duty of legitimate public authority to punish malefactors by means of penalties commensurate with the gravity of the crime, *not excluding, in cases of extreme gravity, the death penalty*" (no. 2266, emphasis added).

The gravity of the crime, we see, can be a legitimate basis for the infliction of the death penalty, that is, some crimes can be deserving of the death penalty, whether or not the criminal still poses an aggressor's threat. What is remarkable is that in the 1997 definitive edition the clause that reads "not excluding, in cases of extreme gravity, the death penalty," *is suppressed.*

Cardinal Dulles fails to contend with the fact that implicit in the *Catechism*'s text is an understanding of the death penalty which limits its lawful infliction to conditions traditionally circumscribing legitimate killing in private self-defense. The new framework leads me to conclude that the *Catechism* is laying a theoretical foundation for a change (not "development" precisely understood) in the Church's teaching on the death penalty that would at minimum state that the exigencies of retribution (i.e., of the need to redress the disorder introduced by a criminal's crime) are never a sufficient condition for the inflicting of capital punishment. That is to say, death as a *punishment* is never legitimate.

E. Christian Brugger
Department of Religious Studies
Loyola University of New Orleans

When Pope Paul VI issued *Humanae Vitae* in 1968, many liberal Catholics rejected the encyclical and even the Church itself. The teaching of John Paul II on the death penalty may be the *Humanae Vitae* of some politically conservative, orthodox Catholics. Avery Cardinal Dulles' systematic analysis will be helpful to such persons. Addressing this subject "as a theologian," he shows the reasonableness of the Pope's position in the civil as well as the religious context.

In one respect, I suggest that Cardinal Dulles' analysis would have been stronger if it had been more explicit. He accurately describes the purposes of punishment as "rehabilitation, defense against the criminal, deterrence, and retribution." *Evangelium Vitae*, no. 56, and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2266, agree that "the primary aim" of punishment is the retributive one of "redressing the disorder introduced by the offense." A reading of the 1992 and the final 1997 versions of no. 2267 of the *Catechism*, however, leads to the conclusion that retributive and general deterrent reasons are no longer sufficient to justify use of the death penalty.

The 1992 version of no. 2267 said that "public authority should limit itself" to "bloodless means" if they "are sufficient to defend human lives against an aggressor and to protect public order and the safety of persons." The final version, however, allows use of the death penalty only "if this is the only possible way of effectively defending human lives against the unjust aggressor. If, however, nonlethal means are sufficient to defend and protect people's safety from the aggressor, authority will limit itself to such means. . . . Today . . . as a consequence of the possibilities which the state has for effectively preventing crime, by rendering one who has committed an offense incapable of doing harm—without definitively taking away from him the possibility of redeeming himself—the cases in which the execution of the offender is an absolute necessity are very rare, if not practically nonexistent."

This final text omits the generalized 1992 reference to the protection of "public order and the safety of persons." Those broad objectives could include protection of the "safety of persons" by deterrence of others in addition to the offender and by a generalized promotion of "public order" by "redressing the disorder introduced by the offense." The final version substitutes, as the indispensable criterion, "effectively defending human lives against the unjust aggressor." It focuses only on protection of others *from this criminal.* "Redressing the disorder" is still the primary aim of punishment. But neither it nor anything else by itself justi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fies the death penalty apart from the definitive criterion that it must be "the only possible way of effectively defending" other lives from this convicted criminal. Thus, in his 1999 exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, John Paul quoted no. 2267 of the *Catechism* in criticizing "the unnecessary recourse to the death penalty when other 'bloodless means are sufficient to defend human lives against an aggressor and to protect public order and the safety of persons.'"

The reason for this focus on the protection of other lives from this convicted criminal is the importance of his conversion. *Evangelium Vitae* is "a pressing appeal addressed to each and every person, in the name of God: respect, protect, love and serve life, every human life!" God put a mark on Cain, not to make him a target, but to protect him: "Not even a murderer loses his personal dignity, and God himself pledges to guarantee this. . . . God, who preferred the correction rather than the death of a sinner, did not desire that a homicide be punished by the exaction of another act of homicide."

St. Thomas Aquinas said that "if a man be dangerous and infectious to the community, on account of some sin, it is praiseworthy and advantageous that he be killed in order to safeguard the common good, since 'a little leaven corrupteth the whole lump' (1 Corinthians 5:6)" (*ST* II-II q. 64, art. 2). But he affirmed separately that the conversion of one sinner is a greater good than the creation of the material universe: "The justification of the ungodly . . . is greater than the creation of heaven and earth. . . . Hence, Augustine [says] that 'for a just man to be made from a sinner is greater than to create heaven and earth . . . for heaven and earth shall pass away, but the justification of the ungodly shall endure'" (*ST* I-II, q. 113, art. 9). If Aquinas were around today, it is fair to speculate as to whether he might support John Paul's position, first because he is the Pope, and second, because of our ability today to keep criminals from being "dangerous and infectious to the community" without cutting off their chance for conversion.

Nor can it be objected that John Paul's position is merely his own personal opinion. He did put it into the *Catechism*. Even under that teaching, however, one could still argue for the death penalty in limited cases. If a life inmate murders another inmate or a guard, what do you do? Give him another life sentence? Or would it be consistent with his dignity to confine him permanently in a cell, with a slot to transmit food and waste, and with no direct contact ever with another human being? Even with the life inmate who murders, however, the issue is debatable. Similarly with an unstable situation in which the state is unable to confine inmates securely. What is clear, however, is that if a Catholic is to be consistent with the teaching of his Church, he can no longer argue for the death penalty on the general bases of retribution, deterrence of other potential criminals, or any of the other familiar conservative or neoconservative arguments, unless that penalty is "the only possible way of effectively defending" other lives from this criminal.

Before *Evangelium Vitae*, I and others argued for the use of the death penalty on the ground that, for some crimes, it was the only penalty that would fit the crime and restore the balance of justice. It promoted respect for innocent life by stigmatizing murder as the crime of crimes, with a punishment qualitatively different from the punishment, say, for larceny. John Paul has made that and similar arguments obsolete. He challenges the claim of the modern secular state to be the arbiter of the ending as well as the beginning of life. He insists that the power of the state is subject to the law of the Lord of life. He seeks the protection of society and of innocent life, not through homicidal acts of the state, but through a "cultural transformation" building a "new culture of life." "The first and fundamental step towards this cultural transformation consists in forming consciences with regard to the incomparable and inviolable worth of every human life" (*EV*, no. 95). Cardinal Dulles is right on the money in this regard when he notes that "in our day the state is generally viewed simply as an instrument of the will of the governed. In this modern perspective, the death penalty expresses not the divine judgment on objective evil but rather the collective anger of the group. The retributive goal of punishment is misconstrued as a self-assertive act of vengeance."

Lastly, the spectacle of the execution of Timothy McVeigh brings to mind Cardinal Dulles' description of an objection to the death penalty which he thinks has "some probable force": "Another objection observes that the death penalty often has the effect of whetting an inordinate appetite for revenge rather than satisfying an authentic zeal for justice. By giving in to a perverse spirit of vindictiveness or a morbid attraction to the gruesome, the courts contribute to the degradation of the culture, replicating the worst features of the Roman Empire in its period of decline."

Charles E. Rice
Notre Dame Law School
South Bend, Indiana

The distinction between the right to exact capital punishment and the prudential decision to exercise that right provides the spine of Avery Cardinal Dulles' crisp, clear, and cogent article. By way of comment, I want to say some things about a) an ambiguity in *Evangelium Vitae*, b) an unmentioned consequence of the current fuzziness about the nature of punishment, and c) how John Paul II's campaign against the death penalty relates to his remarks about a culture of death.

The relevant paragraphs in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* have been rewritten in light of *Evangelium Vitae*, but there remains an ambiguity

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that has led many to conclude that the Church has abandoned its long tradition on the licitness of the death penalty.

Three justifications for punishment are given: retribution redressing the disorder caused by the crime, protection of society, and punishment's medicinal value. But then we read that modern developments in imprisonment enable society to protect itself by unbloody means and that the death penalty should become so rare as to be nonexistent. Since retribution is the primary justification of punishment, this seems to elevate a secondary into the primary justification of punishment. (And of course, protecting society against possible future crimes of the criminal leaves unaddressed the actual crime for which he is imprisoned.) Hence the surprising claim by some that retribution is no longer a feature of Church teaching on punishment. Despite this ambiguity, no one reading the *Catechism* can ignore the reminder that the traditional teaching of the Church has acknowledged as well-founded the right and duty of legitimate public authority to exact even the death penalty in carefully defined situations. Some wrongly read this as the Church bidding adieu to that teaching of the Church rather than its reiteration.

Opposition to the death penalty tout court puts one in some strange company, rendering ambiguous the ascription of this opposition to a keener moral sense in our times. The secular Enlightenment attitude toward human action, responsibility, and ultimate destiny is antithetical to a sound philosophical and Christian view of crime and punishment. It is noteworthy that there are now campaigns against life imprisonment as well as capital punishment. The animus is against punishment as such rather than a species of it. Regarding punishment as revenge has consequences for Catholics that have not been taken sufficiently into account.

When I ask groups of students, prior to reading the relevant paragraphs of *Evangelium Vitae*, how many consider the death penalty justified, the answer is overwhelmingly negative. Eventually, as the discussion proceeds, it becomes clear that that view is based on the notion that no human person, being made in the image and likeness of God, can ever lose the right to life, no matter how serious his crime. When, against this background, I raise the question of eternal punishment, an uneasy silence falls. I take this to suggest a weakening of the view of the ultimate stakes of human life as laid out, for example, in Dante's *Divine Comedy*. The literal meaning of the poem is the state of souls after death. But if the work is taken allegorically, its subject is man as justly meriting eternal punishment or reward by the exercise of his free will. Dr. Johnson's famous remark about the prospect of hanging concentrating the mind can only be appreciated when we understand what he thought the mind should be concentrating on.

Finally, there is the matter of the relationship between the Pope's opposition to capital punishment and his conception of the culture of death. The traditional justification for the death penalty sees the state as the instrument of the common good. But modern states, most notably in the matter of abortion, have farmed out to some members of society the right to take innocent human life. Is the Holy Father suggesting that such states no longer meet the conditions of the traditional justification for the death penalty? If that be the case, the opposition to the death penalty has far deeper implications than appear on the surface.

Ralph McInerny
University of Notre Dame
South Bend, Indiana

I was glad to see Avery Cardinal Dulles tackle the death penalty issue. He begins with the neutral observation that "among the nations of the Western world the United States is singular in having the death penalty," a welcome change from the more tendentious way this fact is often presented by Catholic clergy. For example, Father Joseph Fahy, C.P., wrote in the *Georgia Bulletin* (January 4, 2001) that "many nations look with dismay at the death penalty in the United States."

Such statements overlook the sentiments of the people of those countries. In Canada, where capital punishment for civilians was abolished in the mid-seventies and military executions were banned in 1998, polls consistently show that between 60 percent and 70 percent of Canadians want it reinstated. The poll question "Do you support the death penalty for aggravated murder?" gets a positive answer from between two-thirds and three-quarters of the population in Britain. In Italy about 50 percent of the people want it restored. An article in the *UNESCO Courier* referring to France noted that "action by courageous political leaders has been needed to overcome local public opinion that has remained mostly in favor of the death penalty." The abolition of the death penalty was accomplished in Europe not through democratic means nor in response to public opinion, but rather through politicians imposing their ideology on the people.

Cardinal Dulles seems to want to make the legitimacy of the administration of the penalty dependent in some way upon the self-understanding of society. Once the penalty has been reduced to this symbolic function, he argues that the symbolism is only "authentic" if the society believes in "a transcendent order of justice." This criterion is hardly consonant, as William F. Buckley, Jr. has suggested, with the classical tradition. There is no reason to think that, at the time that St. Paul wrote to the Romans, belief in "a transcendent order of justice" generally informed the civil authority. This authority, which permitted infanticide, slavery, and blood sports, was, according to the Apostle, "the servant of God to exe-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cute His wrath," not because of what the society believed but because God had instituted this authority.

The death penalty for murder is the command of God. Additionally, it serves the law's appropriate pedagogical function, teaching that human life is sacred. God's intention to establish strict justice in response to murder is meant to protect the truth of the sacred nature of human life. It is precisely because human beings are made in the image of God that murderers are to be put to death. Ignore this principle, and the value assigned to human life in society's collective consciousness deteriorates, and hence we see the rise of abortion, euthanasia, etc. The fatuous, unhistorical rhetoric that associates abortion and other features of the "culture of death" with the application of the death penalty cannot be anything other than a radical departure from the received tradition.

God knew that human sentiment might shrink from the exercise of this duty. That is why he repeatedly warns the Israelites that they must not pity the man who is to be executed (Deuteronomy 19:13,21). Nowhere do the Scriptures warn against someone feeling vengeful toward the person who is being executed; yet Cardinal Dulles seems to think that an execution lacks legitimacy if it is perceived as vengeance. This raises all sorts of problems.

There have probably been very few executions in history where someone did not experience feelings of vengeance toward the person being punished. Especially in the case of the family members and close friends of the victim, one would imagine that emotions often run high. Cardinal Dulles does not explain how many people in the society have to feel vengeful about any particular execution in order for it to be illegitimate, nor how we could even know.

Furthermore, there has been no "progress" in our ability to hold prisoners for life in literally millennia. The ancient Greeks and Romans certainly were capable of doing so. Every culture that retained slaves for life was capable of locking up criminals, for life, if necessary—actually more capable than we are because they were less squeamish about prison conditions. What were dungeons for, or the Tower of London? There has simply been no improvement in this ability.

Catholic clergy will continue to nibble away at the energy, resources, manpower, and credibility of the pro-life movement as long as they continue making abortion/euthanasia just one-third of a "pro-life" tripod. To put it succinctly: the problem in this country is not that murderers are on death row. The problem is that abortionists are not on death row.

Any consideration of the death penalty that collapses the distinctions between guilt and innocence, between execution and murder, between an allowance and a duty, between retribution and revenge is wrong. Catholic thought is known for its richness, clarity, and logic, and most of all for its realism. We must reclaim that richness of thought in the context of discussion about this subject.

Mary Kochan
Douglasville, Georgia

Avery Cardinal Dulles' treatment of the death penalty risks grave misunderstanding over current Church teaching. Given the Cardinal's deserved reputation for orthodoxy and integrity, one expects his work to serve up Church teaching neat, at least at discussion's outset. Instead, he implicitly diverges from what the Holy See proclaims.

Cardinal Dulles identifies four purposes of punishment—rehabilitation, incapacitation, deterrence, and retribution—and asserts that the death penalty "is appropriate when it is necessary to achieve the *purposes* of punishment and when it does not have disproportionate evil effects. I say 'necessary' because I am of the opinion that killing should be avoided if the *purposes* of punishment can be obtained by bloodless means" (emphasis added).

The Church also recognizes the multiple ends of punishment. She, however, now holds that only one purpose of punishment—incapacitation—can justify resort to the death penalty. This principle emerges inescapably from *Evangelium Vitae*. We "ought not go to the extreme of executing the offender except in cases of absolute necessity: in other words, when it would not be possible to otherwise defend society."

The 1997 revision of the *Catechism* only made things clearer. An ambiguous reference to the acceptability of execution "in cases of extreme gravity" was removed. Reflecting the teachings of *Evangelium Vitae*, the revised *Catechism* stated that the Church "does not exclude recourse to the death penalty, if this is the only possible way of effectively defending human lives against the unjust aggressor." But, "as a consequence of the possibilities which the state [today] has for effectively preventing crime by rendering one who has committed an offense incapable of doing harm . . . the cases in which the execution of the defender is an absolute necessity 'are very rare, if not practically nonexistent.'"

Cardinal Dulles' greater permissiveness may seem abstract, but it potentially carries lethal consequences. Common sense precludes any Catholic from prudentially concluding that a killer cannot be incapacitated through life without parole in a maximum security prison. However, many Catholics may prudentially (if imprudently) discern a deterrent value in execution, clinging to the notion that some would-be murderer somewhere, sometime suffered second thoughts, owing to the prospect of imminent death. Such Catholics see a world very different from one where "cases of absolute necessity" are "very rare if not practically nonexistent."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Cardinal Dulles' concern is with maintaining continuity; he says as much with his reference to teaching on divorce, abortion, etc. It is not hard to understand this focus amidst the din of trendy Catholics who count our past as all albatross and no treasure. More, the rapid development of death penalty teaching has certainly been seized upon as evidence of magisterial reversibility. A few years ago I spoke on a capital punishment panel with another Jesuit of great intelligence and renown. He sounded as enthused about the fact that Church teaching once supported a broad death penalty as he was over current teaching against it. "Aha! You see, teaching is not immutable!" he seemed to crow.

Cardinal Dulles rightly attends to the past. We should, for instance, note Pius XII's plea for the Rosenbergs and Paul VI's 1975 intervention on behalf of Spanish terrorists sentenced to death. We should ask whether developments under John Paul II have really been so steep and sudden. We should, likewise, hear in the Holy Father's present emphasis on potential redemption and human dignity the echo of a rabbinical carpenter rescuing a condemned adulteress two thousand years ago.

Draw on the past; try to square with the past. But let us not imagine dovetailing with the past where that is not the case. It is not even good strategy, if the aim is to shore up Church authority. A church that acknowledges necessary change may indeed spur dissenters who believe themselves the agents of future necessary change. But how much less stable is a church unable to express itself clearly, a church that must somehow be saying something about the death penalty different from what it said in the past? That church doesn't have dissent or, for that matter, orthodoxy. It simply hosts a Rorschachian free-for-all.

A final point. Cardinal Dulles uses a right-to-life distinction to separate abortion from state execution, rather than a sanctity-of-life principle to link them in the spirit of *Evangelium Vitae*. This too evinces anything but the worldly cunning Our Lord commended to his disciples. Given the past century of genocides, the Catholic Church can hardly gain a prophetic hearing by emphasizing the state's theoretical right to kill. Indeed, her brave, unyielding plea for the unborn will only suffer when her best theologian makes undue allowance for an obsolete convention that lists under the weight of its mistakes, oozes with racism, and reinforces a culture of death.

Kevin M. Doyle
New York, New York

Avery Cardinal Dulles' article goes a long way in challenging the use of the death penalty today, but it leaves out an important consideration: in many cases, persons who commit heinous crimes subject to capital punishment do not have the kind of freedom over the moral persons they have become to legitimate the ultimate punishment of death. Under this consideration, the question of justice is not raised simply with regard to the person who has committed the crime; it is also raised against capital punishment itself with regard to the offender's own history. Again and again, investigation into the lives of persons who have committed heinous crimes reveals a past where assessments of moral responsibility are muddied by child abuse, poverty, mental illness, and many other factors that in some way challenge the assumed account of moral freedom lying behind capital punishment. While some form of punishment may still be necessary (tragically necessary in some cases), the legitimacy of the ultimate punishment is brought into question.

For reasons not too hard to discover, Christian thought has often been reluctant to include this type of consideration. The moral life is thought to be fully in the self's control. If only to account for repeated moral exhortation in Scripture, something seems right about thinking that nothing threatens the possibility of living in accordance with God's moral law. On the other hand, doctrines of both grace and sin teach that something outside the self conditions the self, challenging any simple assumptions about our own powers.

Mark Totten
Yale University
New Haven, Connecticut

After a helpful summary of the Church's view of the state's responsibility to execute justice and preserve the social order, Avery Cardinal Dulles writes: "In light of all of this it seems safe to conclude that the death penalty is not in itself a violation of the right to life." The conclusion to his essay, however, seems to disavow any knowledge of the long history of the Church in its wrestling with this issue when it accords Catholic opposition to the death penalty *in recent years* a theological priority. Strangely, Cardinal Dulles' personal position is a contradiction of the authority he adduces at the outset of his essay: "The Pope and the bishops, using their prudential judgment, have concluded that in contemporary society, at least in countries like our own, the death penalty ought not to be invoked, because, on balance, it does more harm than good." And sadly, this statement begs myriads of questions, going unsupported either by scriptural confirmation or tradition—the two authorities noted by Cardinal Dulles at the beginning of his essay.

Altogether missing from this position on the death penalty is any interaction with biblical revelation. Cardinal Dulles cites numerous Old and New Testament texts early on, then proceeds to ignore them as if new revelation through the Magisterium and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops somehow cancels out what is binding for all times and all cultures. Given the fact that the author is "here addressing the subject as a theologian," it is most disappointing that he fails to deal with key

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

scriptural texts such as Genesis 9, Numbers 35, and Romans 13, since such texts have important theological implications for contemporary society.

It should be observed that as late as 1955 the Catholic Church defended the role of the state in upholding capital justice. In addressing Italian Catholic jurists, Pius XII reaffirmed the Church's historic recognition of vindicatory as well as therapeutic penology, noting that this was "in conformity with what sources of revelation and traditional doctrine teach regarding the coercive power of legitimate human authority." The mandate of Romans 13:4, noted the pontiff, is "as little determined by time and culture as the nature of man and the human society by nature itself."

Catholic theology, as Cardinal Dulles failed to remind us directly, has traditionally defended the right of the state to impose capital punishment for certain heinous crimes. In the public debate over the death penalty, we are dealing with values of the highest order: respect for the sacredness of human life and its protection, the preservation of order in society, and the attainment of justice through law. The function of biblical sanctions against murder, as the Church until fairly recently has understood, is to discourage the wanton destruction of innocent life.

Readers of FIRST THINGS await an articulation of the Church's consensual wisdom regarding this issue that does justice both to Scripture and to ecclesiastical tradition.

J. Daryl Charles
Department of Religion
and Philosophy
Taylor University
Upland, Indiana

Capital punishment is so inherent in the notion of a state's right to protect its citizens that up until modern times no one doubted the right of the state to do so. But since the right to inflict death is so close to the power of God, the moral conclusion is that it must be the last resort of the state after all other methods have been tried and exhausted.

Is therefore the Catholic Church abolitionist in the matter of capital punishment? Yes and no. *No* as a matter of right because the state must retain this power to protect its citizens in extreme cases (e.g., a breakdown of law and order). *Yes* from a practical point of view and given our modern penal system. The way capital punishment is administered today is the moral equivalent of legal murder because other, nonlethal means exist to protect citizens from murderers. In this sense the Catholic Church today is abolitionist *for all practical purposes* while still remaining non-abolitionist in theory. Cardinal Dulles is correct when he concludes that in present circumstances "the death penalty ought not to be invoked, because, on balance, it does more harm than good." I consider the matter morally closed.

Peter J. Riga
Houston, Texas

Avery Cardinal Dulles' excellent review of the Catholic position clearly shows that the (infallible) teaching of the ordinary Magisterium is that the death penalty is morally legitimate. Hence, arguments against the death penalty are prudential, not moral. And they basically rest on this, as Pope John Paul II said in *Evangelium Vitae*: "As a result of steady improvement in the organization of the penal system," the need for capital punishment is now "very rare if not nonexistent" as the least severe sanction necessary to ensure obedience to the law. But just what *are* these improvements, and how is it that before they were made, imprisonment for life was not sufficient to ensure obedience?

I do not see how a rational case can be made on this point. Sanctions are threats of bad effects attached to laws to motivate obedience. But one can only so motivate *reasonable* people, people looking to their objective advantage. So if the death penalty was legitimate in the past, then it follows that at that time life imprisonment was not sufficient to motivate people not to commit capital crimes like terrorism, murder, or rape. But if it now is sufficient, this has to mean that prison conditions have become significantly *worse* than a century or more ago, so that now the prospect is as bad as death was then. But in reality, prison conditions have become much more humane than in previous centuries.

It will not do to argue that life in prison was "really" sufficient back then, and society just didn't realize it and imposed the death penalty because it *thought* that death was the least sufficient deterrent. There is no difference between this and saying that the death penalty is always "really" wrong, which is contrary to Church teaching.

If the death penalty is the least sufficient deterrent, then to abolish it is to acquiesce in the murders, rapes, and acts of terrorism that would follow. I don't see how all the arguments Cardinal Dulles lists against the death penalty overcome this one.

George A. Blair
Cincinnati, Ohio

Absent the death penalty, the most severe punishment that the state can impose is life imprisonment without hope of parole. If that is the maximum sentence to be imposed for the commission of the most heinous taking of innocent life, and if that penalty may also be imposed for the commission of other crimes, such as rape, vicious assault, repeated armed robbery, treason, etc., then the conclusion to be drawn is that those lesser crimes are the equivalent evil of murder—the unjustified taking of innocent life. That result would, in the long run, convey to society the idea that murder is no worse than such other crimes, and, hence, the value of innocent life destroyed would be demeaned and cheapened.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Accordingly, I suggest that the death penalty, imposed cautiously and in limited circumstances, is needed, among other reasons, to uphold the value of life—the life of the innocent victim of the crime.

Lawrence J. Franck
Madison, Mississippi

Avery Cardinal Dulles does not address the plight of the families of convicted criminals. Consider the wife of a man condemned to prison for the rest of his life. Either she gets a divorce, which we abhor, or she spends her life in unhappy limbo, not quite a wife nor yet a widow, an object of pity or contempt to everyone who knows her. In my judgment it would be more humane to render her a widow. After an appropriate period of mourning, she would be free to remarry or build whatever kind of new life she desired. Similarly, the child who can truthfully say "My father is dead" suffers less abuse from peers than one forced to confess "My father is in prison."

I do not believe capital punishment receives the careful thought the subject warrants. Either commentators are overcome by ripe sentimentality or, inflamed by reports of an especially egregious crime, they demand blood. Cardinal Dulles' perceptive review of the subject is a welcome exception, for which I am grateful.

Leon Billig
Marble Falls, Texas

Seattle Pacific University
Dean, School of Theology

We are seeking a candidate who will serve as a collaborative leader of the School of Theology and the University at large. The Dean will promote the School and its academic agenda to the Church and the Academy. Teaching experience, a Ph.D. or Th.D. in a related discipline, and administrative abilities are required. Candidates are expected to be informed by the broad Wesleyan tradition of Seattle Pacific University. Contact:

Dr. Frank Spina
School of Theology, Seattle Pacific University
3307 Third Ave. West, Seattle, WA 98119
(206) 281-2342—e-mail: fspina@spu.edu
www.spu.edu

Applications should be received by October 1, 2001

Avery Cardinal Dulles states that "persons who specially represent the Church, such as clergy and religious, in view of their specific vocation, should abstain from pronouncing or executing the sentence of death." Who among us who professes faith in the risen Lord Jesus Christ should not try to "specifically represent the Church"? We who profess faith in Christ are all his representatives, in all times and under all circumstances. It is clear that we all fail to do this with constancy. The failure, however, does not negate the stated truth. And in no way does it excuse or allow us to act in loco parentis for He Who Is in rendering a final life-or-death decision against those who turn away from Him.

John Rich
Religious Society of Friends
(Quaker)
Arlington, Virginia

Avery Cardinal Dulles replies:

All parties to the discussion seem to agree on two basic points: first, that the weight of Scripture and tradition strongly supports the right of the state to inflict capital punishment under some circumstances; and, second, that the Pope and bishops today disapprove of the use of capital punishment. The resulting problem is obvious. Was the teaching of Scripture and tradition wrong, as E. Christian Brugger, Kevin Doyle, and Charles Rice apparently believe? Or are the Pope and the bishops irresponsibly departing from the normative Christian sources, as J. Daryl Charles, George Blair, Lawrence Franck, and Mary Kochan seem prepared to argue?

Those who distance themselves from Scripture and tradition may claim to be loyal to the contemporary Magisterium, but in so doing they go beyond the Magisterium itself. The Pope and bishops, to the best of my knowledge, have not criticized Scripture, the fathers and doctors of the Church, or the previous utterances of the Magisterium. I share their ostensible solidarity with the great tradition. Until someone can show me what was wrong with the previous teaching I will continue to uphold it. Kevin Doyle, while rebuking my conservatism, concedes that it is all too easy to say that because teaching on the death penalty has changed, the Church's current teaching on other issues is likewise subject to contestation. He mentions abortion and divorce, and he might have added other contentious issues such as contraception and the ordination of women. On all these matters the Church feels obliged to retain the doctrine handed down to her. Her primary concern is not to shore up her own authority but to be faithful to her divine Lord.

Professor Brugger presents one interpretation of the alleged doctrinal change. Whereas previously retribution was seen as justifying the death penalty, we now know, he says, that the death penalty ought never be used as punishment. It is justifiable only on the principle of double effect, as an indirect result of society's action in defending itself. Prof. Brugger's strategem fails, in my opinion, because the principle of double effect does not apply if the evil effect is intended (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2263). In the case of capital punishment, the intended object of the act is precisely the death of the offender.

If the Pope and the bishops were abolitionists like Prof. Brugger, one could sympathize with Prof. Charles and the anti-revisionists, who support the biblical heritage as against the contemporary Magisterium. But as I understand it, the Magisterium is saying that although the biblical and traditional doctrine was sound in principle, there are special circumstances in our own day that make the application of the death penalty undesirable. Moderates such as Peter Riga and Ralph McInerny seem to agree with me in so interpreting the Pope and the bishops. But what are these special circumstances? Three possible answers have been proposed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mr. Riga, echoing the very language of John Paul II in *Evangelium Vitae* and the *Catechism*, says that improvements in the penal system make it possible for society to defend itself without executing offenders except in very rare cases. I do not personally follow this argument because it is subject to two objections that I have not been able to answer.

The first objection is that the proposal adverts to only one of the four ends of punishment, passing over the other three (retribution, deterrence, and rehabilitation) in silence. Why is only one of the four purposes discussed in connection with the death penalty? Here lurks an ambiguity that, as Prof. McInerny recognizes, needs to be cleared up.

Is the purpose of the death penalty reducible to the physical defense of society against the criminal or does it include the moral defense and cleansing achieved by administering due punishment? In Scripture and the classical tradition the death penalty was approved primarily on the ground that retribution was needed for the moral health of society. St. Thomas Aquinas gives primary emphasis to the retributive goal of capital punishment in the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book 3, chapters 142-146. In the *Summa Theologiae* he continues to teach that the death penalty is intended to manifest the order of divine justice, which demands that evils be punished according to their gravity (*ST* I-II, q. 87, art. 3, ad 1). This retributive function is quite compatible with the medicinal value of penalties administered in the present life (II-II, q. 108, art. 3, ad 2), since the death penalty serves the common good by expelling noxious elements from society (II-II, q. 64, art. 2c). In our day the Pope and the *Catechism* declare that the primary end of punishment is to redress the disorder introduced by the offense (*EV* 56; *CCC* 2266). This consideration should not be overlooked in discussions of the death penalty.

The other difficulty is that the ability of society to defend itself by the incarceration of dangerous criminals can hardly be called new. As Mary Kochan says, medieval dungeons and *oubliettes* were quite effective. In our day, improved means of communication and modern weapons may render it easier rather than more difficult for prisoners to murder their guards and fellow prisoners or to escape. Lifelong solitary confinement can probably eliminate these risks, but is subject to the charge of being "cruel and unusual punishment."

According to a second account, the undesirability of applying the death penalty in our day is connected with what the Pope calls the "culture of death." Some contend that if the state can execute criminals, it will be seen as having power over life and death, with the result that greater scope will be given to abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, and assisted suicide. Kevin Doyle seems to adopt this line, but to my mind the argument is not convincing. Daryl Charles and Lawrence Franck take the equally plausible view that the practice of capital punishment serves to protect the sacredness of human life. The failure to distinguish between the right to life of the innocent and of the guilty may actually be conducive to the culture of death. If the innocent have no more right to life than the guilty, the state can easily claim the right to dispose of burdensome human lives such as unwanted babies and incurably ill patients. Mary Kochan may be correct in saying that the equating of capital punishment with abortion and euthanasia diminishes the credibility of the pro-life movement.

Dissatisfied with these two approaches, I have rather tentatively proposed a third rationale for concluding that the death penalty should rarely if ever be imposed today. The classical tradition took the view that the state stood somewhere between God and society. The rulers were authorized to wield quasi-divine power as God's ministers. This is, I think, the view of the New Testament authors: not only Paul, but Peter and John as well.

The classical vision of the state has fallen on hard times, perhaps because of the outrageous abuses of governmental power by the Nazis, Stalinists, and Maoists of the past century. For better or for worse, the state in our secular democratic societies is seen as a creature and instrument of the people, bound only to carry out the will of the majority. In a society so governed, it becomes difficult to see the death sentence as representing the divine order of justice. Rather, it is seen as implementing the sovereign will of the people, whose appetite for vengeance grows with what it feeds on.

Moderates such as Charles Rice, Ralph McInery, and Leon Billig seem to find merit in my proposal, without perhaps endorsing everything I say. The reservations of William F. Buckley, Jr., to which Mary Kochan alludes, show the need to maintain key elements in the classical tradition. I stand with Buckley and Kochan in holding that the state has a moral responsibility to uphold the order of justice and that the law has a pedagogical function. I only question whether the execution of a criminal is perceived as representing divine justice in a society like our own.

Several of the letters refer to the deterrent value of the death penalty. Blair affirms this value; Doyle denies it. This is a question of fact that I find difficult to resolve. As I said in my article, it is doubtful that the death penalty as currently administered has much if any deterrent effect.

A number of the letters, while praising certain aspects of my article, think that I am too reluctant to see the death penalty applied today. Mary Kochan, whose observations on the popularity of the death penalty in Western Europe and Canada I have no wish to challenge, parts from me in her views on vengefulness. On this point I think the Scriptures support me. While the passages she cites

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

warn against sentimental pity for executed criminals, texts such as Matthew 5:38 and Romans 12:19 indicate that capital punishment should not be a vendetta visited by victims or their families upon the criminal. On the basis of the Sermon on the Mount, Thomas Aquinas concludes that the Lord forbids killing that results from anger, but not killing that results from zeal for justice (*SCG* 3.146.9). Some of the recent clamor for the execution of Timothy McVeigh strikes me as barbaric and degrading.

Prof. Charles would like me to "interact" with the biblical and magisterial texts he cites. I see no need to do so, because I fully accept the doctrine of these texts, several of which I cited in my article. Recent magisterial statements have by no means canceled out these authoritative pronouncements, but have raised questions about their application. According to the classical tradition itself, punishment should not be inflicted when the infliction does more harm than good. Prof. Charles errs in stating that this prudential principle is "unsupported either by scriptural confirmation or tradition." Thomas Aquinas asserts that the execution of the wicked is forbidden when it cannot be done without danger to the good (*SCG* 146.9; cf. *ST* II-II, q. 43, art. 7, ad 1). As biblical warrant he refers to Matthew 13:29, and as traditional warrant he cites the teaching of Augustine in his *Contra Epistulam Parmeniani.*

Several other issues raised in the correspondence require at least some brief comment. Mark Totten calls attention to the fact that some offenders have very diminished responsibility for their misdeeds. I agree that the courts should take such factors into account. Leon Billig points out that the execution of the criminal may be more merciful to his family than a sentence of life imprisonment. He may be correct, but the legitimacy of the death penalty should not be made to turn on this secondary issue.

John Rich, finally, raises the question whether all Christians should not consider themselves as representing Christ and the Church. As a Quaker he embodies the Christian radicalism that the Catholic Church has sought to perpetuate in monasteries and in the consecrated life. Those who feel called to this Christian radicalism should, I think, be exempted from occupations that might require violence, as do the vocations of soldiers, police officers, judges, and executioners. But society has a right to expect that some Christians should pursue these vocations, since the order of justice may demand an occasional use of force against malefactors. Officers of justice reflect certain attributes of God, if only those which Luther included in "God's left hand."

In my original article and in my answers to the criticisms I seek to maintain the reflective and critical posture of a theologian, not the urgency of an advocate or the stridency of a crusader. Activists on both sides may see my position as too nuanced. I insist on the moral and theological relevance of prudential considerations. Kevin Doyle fears that people who use their own prudence will be imprudent; but I would hold that they are morally accountable if they disregard the prudential judgment of the hierarchical leaders, who speak with authority even when they are not handing on the word of the Lord (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:25). Since prudence is a moral virtue, I cannot accept the dichotomy implied in George Blair's statement, "Arguments against the death penalty are prudential, not moral." The decision whether and when to apply the death penalty cannot be properly made on the basis of abstract dogmatic considerations alone. Christian moral reasoning calls for a high degree of prudence.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This Time

Turn Out the Lights?

James Nuechterlein

Not long ago, my pastor asked if I'd be willing to serve as a delegate for our congregation at the convention of the local synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). I felt guilty doing so, but I turned her down. That's unusual for me (not the guilt, the refusal). I like and admire my pastor, and I don't like saying no to her. But this time I had to. I knew, from previous experience, that going to the meeting would put me in an at least medium-term funk injurious to my spiritual well-being. The ELCA—with its race-and-gender quotas, squishiness on abortion and homosexuality, and general proclivity for political and theological correctness—is not a place where Christians of traditionalist inclinations feel much at home these days.

Well actually, we do and we don't. Most of us ELCA Lutherans of "evangelical catholic" sensibility experience a curious dichotomy in our religious lives. We are thoroughly satisfied with conditions in our local congregations, and thoroughly unsatisfied with conditions in the larger church. (That is just the reverse of what I hear from my conservative Roman Catholic lay friends, all of whom rejoice in what the pontificate of John Paul II has meant for Catholicism at large but many of whom find the banal homilies and slovenly liturgical practices in their local parishes difficult to endure.)

What brings the subject of the state of Lutheranism again to mind is a recent book by Richard Cimino, *Trusting the Spirit: Renewal and Reform in American Religion* (Jossey-Bass, 208 pp., $21.95). Cimino includes a chapter on evangelical catholic Lutherans, whom he defines as those seeking "to recover the liturgical and confessional heritage of Lutheranism in continuity with the broad tradition that includes Anglicans, Roman Catholics, and the Eastern Orthodox, and emphasizes the sacraments and liturgy." He focuses on the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau (ALPB), a pan-Lutheran renewal organization, and the Society of the Holy Trinity (STS for its Latin name), "one of the first religious orders for Lutheran pastors in North American history."

The ALPB was formed in 1914 to help immigrant German Lutherans adjust to life in America and, more broadly, to establish connections between Lutheranism and the larger American culture. It is an independent entity, institutionally distinct from both the ELCA and the other major American Lutheran body, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). (Full disclosure: I am a member of the ALPB's Board of Directors.) In its long history, the ALPB has adjusted its priorities and programs to meet changing circumstances. Today, in Cimino's words, it acts primarily "as a clearinghouse and resource center where evangelical catholics can find . . . theological and pastoral support for their ministries and concerns about their denominations." To that end it publishes two journals, the quarterly *Lutheran Forum* and the monthly *Forum Letter* (the latter of which was edited for many years by Richard John Neuhaus), in addition to a wide variety of books, tracts, and pamphlets.

The STS is a much newer institution. It was founded in 1996 to help pastors, both ELCA and LCMS, who are in varying ways concerned with theological, moral, and liturgical tendencies in contemporary Lutheranism. Its rule requires that its members engage in daily prayer, attend periodic retreats, and practice individual confession and mutual pastoral visitation. Like the ALPB, the STS avoids participation in the ecclesial politics of its members' church bodies. Evangelical catholics have largely given up on the hope of bending either the ELCA or the LCMS in their direction. They want rather to offer community and consolation to American Lutherans anywhere who share their concerns.

That represents a considerable comedown in expectations. In the 1970s and early 1980s, many evangelical catholics persuaded themselves, naively as it turned out, that they represented the wave of the Lutheran future. Their program of liturgical reform, theological renewal, and ecumenical outreach to Rome ("healing the breach of the sixteenth century") seemed in the ascendancy. But the conservative takeover of the LCMS in the seventies turned that body inward and backward, while the new ELCA, established in 1987, moved from the outset in the direction of the liberal Protestant mainline. In the aftermath, evangelical catholics found themselves on the margins of both churches.

That depressing recent history accounts for the spirit of melancholy often encountered in evangelical catholic circles, a spirit reflected in Cimino's sympathetic but almost elegiac treatment of the movement's current condition. (One of his section subheads reads, "Will the Last Evangelical Catholic Leaving Turn Out the Lights?")

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

One understands the mood of pessimism. The ALPB and the STS both have small memberships: the former numbering in the low thousands, the latter in the low hundreds. They are also both geographically strongest in the northeast, where Lutheranism is numerically weak, which contributes to a sense of irrelevance and ineffectuality. Many evangelical catholic pastors preside over small and ever dwindling congregations.

To make matters worse, evangelical catholics are in a number of ways divided among themselves. Along denominational lines, to begin with. I have found, rather to my surprise, that even within ALPB circles members of the ELCA and the LCMS sometimes regard each other with considerable suspicion. Old stereotypes die hard: Missourians are inclined to assume that ELCA theologians have at best a nodding acquaintance with the Lutheran Confessions of the sixteenth century, while ELCA members, for their part, tend to regard adherents of the LCMS as closet fundamentalists.

Denominational disagreements should not be exaggerated: they are by no means all-pervasive, and where they do hold, they seldom go deep. More significant are divisions between clergy and laity. These are not so much differences in theology as in perspective. Evangelical catholicity is, to begin with, a largely clerical phenomenon. Only 20 percent of current subscribers to *Lutheran Forum*, for example, are laypeople. The overwhelming majority of Lutheran laity are unaware of and uninvolved in the disputes within and between their churches, and Cimino finds that many, even most, of the evangelical catholic pastors he interviewed make little effort to involve their parishioners in the struggles they face. They rarely preach about those conflicts or even bring them up in adult education programs. As one pastor told Cimino: "I have a passion to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments. I [do not] want to use the worship service as a setting to [deal] with . . . church issues."

Even those laypeople informed on the issues respond to them rather differently than most clergy. They are, among other things, less depressed about them. This is quite understandable. I have already noted that most evangelical catholics are quite happy with conditions in their own congregations, and for most laity that is quite enough. We have no regular or necessary involvement in the larger affairs of our churches, and we can treat those churches as little more than annoying distractions. Members of the clergy cannot afford such insouciance. Their professional relation to the larger church, if nothing else, means that they cannot simply act as if it were not there. When I think about the ELCA I mostly grieve, but I mostly do not think about it. It is difficult for ELCA pastors to be so cavalier, and those who hold views toward the church similar to mine necessarily do more grieving.

The most fundamental division in evangelical catholic circles is between those who are determined, come what may, that they will remain Lutheran and those who are at least willing to consider that their catholicity might one day edge into Catholicism. My sense of things is that fewer laity than clergy find themselves tempted by Rome. A fellow lay member of the ALPB board indicated to Cimino her impatience with "Catholic wannabes" among evangelical catholic clergy. "There's nothing wrong with the Lutheran tradition. We don't need to become more Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox. We just have to be Lutheran." I agree with her conclusion and I admire her feistiness.

That feistiness, I recognize, is available only to those with a certain view of what constitutes the Christian ecclesial reality. The evangelical catholic Lutherans I know who have gone to Rome—and I know a distressingly large number of them—have done so, if I understand them rightly, for mostly ecclesiastical reasons. They think Rome has clear claim, in the West at least, to the title of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. Evangelical catholics of my persuasion think of the Church in different terms. We consider that the one Church has had various institutional manifestations through time, and we continue to consider Lutheranism a confessional movement in the one comprehensive Church of Christ whose full lineaments will be made clear only in the End Time.

We do not for a moment minimize the problems, great and small, of the Lutheran churches today, but, as we remind ourselves and others, so it has ever been and ever will be in all the churches that have, in God's mysterious purposes, been part of His one Church on earth. We hold to ecumenism, but we do not think of it as a network of one-way streets that leads, finally and necessarily, only to Rome.

In the meantime, we are grateful for evangelical catholicity's not insubstantial successes. It has created within Lutheranism pockets of faithfulness in doctrine and practice for those who find their distinct Lutheran piety fully compatible with the Great Tradition of Christian orthodoxy. So feisty we will remain. Lutherans know something, after all—if one may be permitted the phrase—about sinning boldly. FT

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Opinion

The Vietnam Wars

Andrew J. Bacevich

Like Israelis and Palestinians eyeing each other suspiciously from adjacent hilltops in the West Bank, Americans who were on opposing sides of the Vietnam War may share the same space, but there should be no confusing cohabitation with reconciliation. Even in the best of times, what passes for "peace" amounts to little more than a precarious cease-fire.

News reports in late April implicating Bob Kerrey in the killing of Vietnamese civilians over thirty years ago in the tiny village of Thanh Phong shattered that truce. In the furious skirmishing that ensued, one point above all became evident: the truce had owed its existence to the small point at which two otherwise divergent views about the war's meaning happened to overlap. That Americans had managed to negotiate some semblance of détente regarding Vietnam amounted to little more than an afterthought; on both the right and the left, what really matters are the opposing myths about the war to which each camp remains devoted. The Kerrey scandal (if it can be called that) not only violated the terms of that détente; more importantly, it challenged those myths.

Since at least the time when Congressman Wilbur Mills was found cavorting in an outdoor fountain with the stripper Fannie Foxe, the ritual humiliation of prominent politicians has been a media staple. Although valued chiefly as entertainment, the periodic exposure of some self-important pol—Wayne Hays, Jim Wright, Dan Rostenkowski, Newt Gingrich—has also served a useful purpose: reminding members of the ruling class that they are neither above the law nor at liberty to flout prevailing standards of ethics and propriety. Setting limits on behavior is both satisfying in its own right and can contribute to the nation's civic health.

But the collaboration of the *New York Times* and CBS' *60 Minutes II* in laying open Mr. Kerrey, a recently retired U.S. Senator still mentioned as potential presidential aspirant, produced something altogether different. As measured by the angry outcries and anguished commentary it prompted, Kerrey's evisceration touched a nerve. What was it about this story that Americans found so disturbing?

In a political culture filled with frauds, phonies, and ideologues, Senator Kerrey enjoyed a reputation for being that rarest of creatures: he was (it was believed) a truth-teller. Unlike other politicos, Kerrey, although by his own lights a loyal Democrat, could be counted on to rise above mere partisanship, to tackle the tough issues from which others flinched, and above all, to speak plainly and forthrightly. Thus when Kerrey famously described Bill Clinton as "an unusually good liar," the charge not only stung, it stuck.

Kerrey's reputation was inextricably linked to his status as a highly decorated combat veteran of the Vietnam War. In that regard, he was one among several U.S. Senators whose identity has become inseparable from that conflict. Among this exclusive club's other members are John McCain, for over five years a POW; John Kerry, a former naval officer who came home from the war to help found Vietnam Veterans Against the War; Max Cleland, a triple amputee; and Chuck Hagel, twice wounded as a sergeant of infantry. Upon each, wartime service has conferred a distinctive and enhanced moral authority.

The respect enjoyed by this group—Kerrey and McCain in particular—derives from a widely held conviction that the Vietnam War was not just any war. On the contrary, in the nation's long history of armed conflict it was sui generis. Indeed, a belief in Vietnam's uniqueness is one of the few points on which a consensus about the war has formed.

For those who supported the war (and for the right more generally), Vietnam was uniquely tragic, especially as measured by the futile exertions of those who fought there and who were (many believe) denied a victory that ought rightfully to have been theirs. In a war that produced scapegoats aplenty—LBJ, McNamara, Westmoreland, Nixon, Kissinger—but no heroes of comparable stature, the young men who actually bore the burden of combat came to seem particularly worthy of admiration. That upon returning home, emotionally if not physically scarred, they were frequently reviled, their service mocked, their sacrifices unappreciated, represented a particular affront.

Among conservatives, the eventual rise of a handful of Vietnam veterans to political prominence helped fill this hero deficit. Indirectly at least, their presence at the center of power vindicated all who had served, offering compensation long owed and recognition long overdue.

That several of these men had been credited with performing acts of great valor—Kerrey had been awarded the Medal of Honor—was not incidental. Battlefield bravery served to revalidate ancient connections between physical courage, manliness, and public virtue

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

otherwise in short supply. Implicit in Kerrey's questioning of Clinton's veracity (and in McCain's quixotic effort to wrest the Republican presidential nomination from George W. Bush) was a rebuke directed at all the hip, clever, and well-connected who, whether acting for ostensibly lofty motives or with an eye toward preserving their "political viability," had sought ways to sit out the war. For those still harboring grudges about Vietnam, that a Kerrey or McCain would deliver such a rebuke was sublimely delicious.

Meanwhile, for those who had opposed the war (and for the left more generally), the uniqueness of Vietnam lay in its evil. As the *New York Times* commented in an editorial prompted by the Kerrey revelations, it was a conflict that "then, as now, seemed to lack any rationale except the wrecking of as many lives as possible on both sides."

If "then" is the early 1960s, the *Times* actually supported U.S. involvement in Vietnam, but no matter. More relevant is the fact that this most recent editorial judgment, despite its apparent severity, actually reveals a noticeable departure from what had been liberal orthodoxy. That today's *Times* implicitly absolves the war's participants of responsibility—it was not combatants on one side who wrecked the lives of their adversaries on the other, but the war itself that did so impartially "on both sides"—marks the distance traveled since My Lai. In those days, when the *Times* assigned culpability, it did not limit itself to blaming the war.

To what can one attribute this shift in the views prevailing in the high church of establishment liberalism? Two explanations exist—one political and one personal.

On the political level, since the end of the Cold War liberals have recovered their appetite for using American power to set right the world's wrongs. Since it is military might that makes U.S. intervention in places like Somalia, Haiti, and the Balkans possible, liberals have found it expedient to remove from the necks of American soldiers the obloquy hung there during Vietnam. In short, those enamored of pursuing an expansive foreign policy today profess an affinity with and affection for "the troops" that, to put it mildly, did not exist from the mid-1960s through the 1980s. But if the principal beneficiaries of this rediscovered affection for soldiers are members of today's armed services, the G.I.'s of the Vietnam era also receive something of a retroactive dispensation. Among opponents of the Vietnam War who have lately shed their aversion to using U.S. military power, Senators Kerrey and McCain—men of palpable decency and integrity—have supplanted William Calley and Ernest Medina as representative Vietnam vets.

On the personal level, at least some members of the chattering classes (including perhaps members of the *Times* editorial board) have developed second thoughts about having avoided military service. For the sons whose fathers had fought World War II, refusing to serve seemed in the 1960s like a brave declaration of political independence and a testament to superior moral acuity. But with the passage of time, it looks increasingly like evidence of a collective loss of nerve, the gauge by which to measure how far the accomplishments of Baby Boomers lag behind those of the so-called "Greatest Generation." They surmounted economic depression, vanquished Hitler, and stood up to Stalin. We smoked dope, worshiped rock 'n' roll, and flung epithets at the Establishment.

Nearly forty years on, in a culture awash with narcissism, in a society of poseurs yearning for "authenticity," more than a few Boomers vaguely regret that the test of military service is one on which they chose to pass. Even (or especially) in liberal quarters, select members of that generation who did serve have taken on a certain allure. Those who actually experienced serious combat—who exhibited notable courage, bled, endured torture, and returned from a heinous war not embittered or broken but seemingly tougher and wiser—have acquired something akin to glamour. Call it Viet Chic. How else to explain the media frenzy touched off when John McCain set out on his "Straight Talk Express"? Something other than a public clamor for campaign finance reform gave the McCain story its legs.

In short, by the year 2000, for both the right and the left, Senators Kerrey and McCain (along with a handful of others) had become central figures in efforts to incorporate Vietnam into each camp's preferred narrative of recent American history. Although conservatives and liberals continued to advance radically contradictory accounts of that war, both agreed on one point: men such as Kerrey and McCain were bona fide American heroes, admired as men of candor and character.

After Thanh Phong, it is no longer possible fully to accept that formulation. The celebrated hero, it turns out, was complicit in gunning down women, children, and old men—and even accepted a medal for doing so. The widely admired truth-teller harbored dark secrets. Had those secrets been known, the brilliant political career of Senator Bob Kerrey would likely never have occurred.

To the fury of those on the right, the incident at Thanh Phong breathed new life into the old charge that My Lai had been anything but an anomaly. Kerrey, the good soldier, and Calley, the war criminal, apparently did not differ as much as previously advertised. Worse, Kerrey himself was complicit in this blurring of identity, characterizing his involvement in killing civilians as "an atrocity" for which he felt "guilt and shame." Kerrey not only suggested that he himself had not been

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a hero; he raised doubts about whether heroism in Vietnam had even been possible.

In doing so, Kerrey placed himself directly at odds with those who had made the tragic Vietnam veteran central to their understanding of the war. The effect of Kerrey's retreat "into a kind of neurotic confessional mode," observed John O'Sullivan in *National Review*, was to "entrench the left's view of the Vietnam War as the authorized version as binding on all." To those whose authorized version of the war differed, Kerrey's refusal to proclaim his own innocence seemed like an outright admission of wrongdoing. To the right, it amounted to an act of betrayal.

On the left, Thanh Phong likewise came as a rude awakening. Having fallen head over heels for the dashing lothario, liberals discovered that he had all along been concealing a sordid past. Kerrey had taken them in, played them for suckers, until they had finally exposed him for what he was: a phony like the rest.

Kerrey's explanation of the "firefight" portrayed a confusing, complicated war. This, veteran opponents of Vietnam rejected outright. They responded by resurrecting their own canonical interpretation of the war's nature. Thanh Phong, wrote James Carroll in the *Boston Globe*, simply confirmed that in Vietnam the United States had been "waging a war that was consistently, not exceptionally, against civilians." What Carroll termed "Kerrey's killings" showed that "we have barely begun to plumb the depths of the physical abyss into which America dragged Vietnam, the moral abyss into which America jumped." Carroll and others of his ilk are determined never to allow the United States to climb out of that abyss. The image of Vietnam as uniquely evil must remain sacrosanct.

It was excruciating to watch Kerrey attempt to answer the barrage of questions hurled at him by his interrogators. Remarkably, he did not flinch. He offered no excuses. But his account of the awful events that occurred on that night so long ago satisfied almost no one. It failed to satisfy because it required that others recognize a truth in terms other than black and white.

When it comes to Vietnam, Americans prefer the simple to the complex. Few of us are willing to relinquish the myths that have enabled us to come to terms with a war whose moral status remains decidedly ambiguous. Bob Kerrey's story has drawn attention to the presence of those myths and forced us to confront, if only for a moment, the complicated reality they conceal. The piercing of illusions can be a painful process. Bob Kerrey's public ordeal was the price he was obliged to pay for inflicting that pain on his fellow citizens.

Andrew J. Bacevich *is Professor of International Relations at Boston University.*

Putting Parents in Charge

Theodore Forstmann

Lincoln warned that the United States could not long survive half slave and half free. To which one might ask, why not? The answer has to do with more than slavery and freedom. It has to do with the contradiction between one institution and the larger society in which it exists. When the institution is private, informal, and small, the inconsistency might be overlooked. But when the institution is pervasive, compulsory, and sanctioned by law, its opposition to the values governing the rest of society becomes more difficult to ignore. Like a foreign disk fed into the drive of an incompatible computer, its script is at odds with the language of its host.

Of course there have been times in our history when contradictory institutions have coexisted, when self-evident truths have been applied selectively or principles have been deemed appropriate for some but not for others—for example, slaveholders signing the Declaration of Independence, suffrage withheld from women, and segregation within a nation of citizens supposedly equal and free. These contradictions may persist for a while, abetted by ignorance, indifference, entrenched interest, or force. But ultimately the inconsistency becomes insupportable. The crossed beams and tortured arguments beneath its weight begin to buckle. Truth, like gravity, exerts its force over time.

Of course, this is not a passive process. Quite the opposite. Wars, civil agitation, protests, speeches, marches—the struggle for equality and freedom has required sacrifice, faith, and willingness to fight. Invariably it is pitched against larger forces, and waged against the odds. But the underdogs have always held one weapon against which their adversaries had no defense: truths which all agreed were true. Principles which, spoken loudly and often enough, morally disarmed those who claimed to subscribe to those principles, even as they clung to institutions that denied them.

Today such a contradiction obstructs the path to improving American education. We live in a society that thrives on democratic capitalism. This is a statement of fact that no one—from Jesse Helms on one end of the political spectrum to Hillary Rodham Clinton on the other—will dispute. Yet we operate our education system by principles diametrically opposed to democratic capitalism.

Democratic means many things, but it means at least this: that people have a say. We trust people to choose their party affiliation, their Congressmen, their Sena-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tors, their President—and through these representatives, their laws and government. We trust people not only to select politicians, but to do other, arguably even more dangerous, things. Like driving, for example. We let people have control over multi-ton vehicles—to choose their roads, pass cars, and drive at high speeds vehicles that are potential killers. We let people choose where to live, what to read, how to pray, whether to drink—in short, and within relatively moderate limits, how to live their lives. But we do not let people choose the education they would like for their children.

That's one contradiction. The second is that America is not only a democratic country but a capitalist one as well. Suppliers compete for the choice, the business, of the individual. In all areas except one: education. As the late Al Shanker, former head of the American Federation of Teachers, observed:

> It's time to admit that public education operates like a planned economy, a bureaucratic system in which everybody's role is spelled out in advance and there are few incentives for innovation and productivity. It's no surprise that our school system doesn't improve: it more resembles the Communist economy than our own market economy.

Why don't we apply democratic capitalism to education? There must be a very good reason for such a gross inconsistency.

It is not that the American founders wanted it this way. For the first 230 years of our history, parents, not government, were in charge. Competition kept quality high and costs low. Competence in reading, writing, and arithmetic was nearly universal at the time of the American Revolution. But by the mid-nineteenth century, a band of reformers led by Horace Mann of Massachusetts replaced our founding, free-market education system with a system of state-run education, with compulsory attendance and standardized curriculum.

It is not the case that, while the rest of America steams ahead on democratic capitalist principles, education flourishes on others. Education is far from flourishing. Despite a fourteen-fold increase in inflation-adjusted spending since 1920, longer school years, doubling of teachers' salaries, and smaller class sizes, a quarter of young Americans have little to no grasp of written English, test scores have stagnated or declined, international rankings are beyond embarrassing, and census data show that public schools have become the second most likely place in America for a violent crime to be committed.

We should not be surprised. We've known forever that monopolies don't work. We've known that the democratic-capitalist model—while not perfect—is vastly better than the centralized, state-run models that countries are abandoning, one by one, around the world. So why is education exempted from the model we apply to everything else in America? And how do we go about connecting education to the energy, creativity, and drive that powers democratic capitalism?

The answer is simple: put parents in charge. You can't have a monopoly system if parents are in charge. The two simply cannot coexist. Parents will not voluntarily continue to send their children to schools that cannot teach or protect their children. Parents will not all choose the same, acme-brand education product. They will choose schools as various and unique as their children's personalities, abilities, and dreams. And as newly energized, newly involved parents choose from multiple education suppliers, new sources of supply will emerge, and all will compete on cost, quality, and innovation.

Without parents in charge, no amount of "reform" is ever going to fix the monopoly. Seven waves of national reform have washed over an impervious education establishment, yet schools seem to get worse, not better, after every one. Without parents in charge no amount of money is ever going to be enough. Over a hundred studies have tried to show a connection between increased spending and increased learning; not one has succeeded. Without parents in charge, no increase in the number of school days is ever going to be enough, as even a cursory glance at international experience will confirm. Hong Kong, with its short school year, beats Japan in every math and science competition. Israel, with its long school year, can't keep up with Belgium, which has the shortest school year in the world. Yet our politicians continue to propose longer school years—most recently, California Governor Gray Davis' proposal to keep kids in school for an extra thirty days, and Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's call for weekend classes in science.

Ironically these ideas appeal to conservatives, sometimes even more than to liberals, because they sound tough and rigorous. Witness the calls for more testing, more discipline, school uniforms, or the new magic mantra of "accountability." With due respect to the new administration in Washington, the issue is not accountability, but accountability to *whom*? The question is not how high to set the standards, but standards set by *whom*? By school boards? By governors? By the President of the United States? Or by parents?

Raising standards in the same old monopoly system isn't going to change it into anything other than what it is. You can't change a donkey into a horse. You can braid his tail and raise the bar, but that still isn't going to make him jump. Unfortunately, there are a lot of people who are betting on the donkey. Over the years, the current system has attracted powerful commercial and political allies. If parents were in charge, those who

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

benefit from the status quo would stand to lose a lot. And they know it.

Yet as long as we continue to debate how to fix the current monopoly, its defenders will always win. In a battle between two opposing sides, the one with the most consistent position necessarily has the edge. If we return to the beginning, if we start with first things, we will have a firmer foundation from which to argue, both logically and morally.

There is, for instance, this first thing: To whom was the child born? Not to a governor, not to a chancellor, not to a secretary of education. The child was born not to the government but to the parents. Therefore the parents, not the government, have a prior right—and thus primary responsibility—to determine the education of the child. This principle transcends ideological labels, party affiliations, even national boundaries. That parents have "a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children" is affirmed in the 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

This was a right American parents enjoyed for over two hundred years. Professional pundits and national experts are fond of bemoaning the disintegration of the American family—the alienation and lack of understanding between parents and their children. Having "outsourced" perhaps the family's most important responsibility—education—and having barred parents from the most important rooms of their children's lives, is it any wonder that the family's form and function has become indeterminate, that parents and children live together, and yet a world apart?

Putting parents back in charge of their children's education would have a transforming effect on many levels—on the child, on the family, on the teaching profession, on schools, on communities. With parents in the driver's seat, schools would compete to attract students, the system would open up, and many new educational options would emerge. I'm not talking about a choice between public schools, parochial schools, and a few high-priced private schools. This is the present reality that we have to look beyond. I'm talking about a future in which parents could choose not just from A or B but from a new constellation of educational options ranging from A through Z.

That's what the rest of America looks like, and what our education system can become. But we will never get from here to there as long as we continue to be sidetracked into marginal debates and technical arguments that obscure the deeper and, if you will, more elementary questions.

We have been sidetracked by failed attempts to enact school vouchers through state referenda. While I believe the voucher proponents have their hearts in the right place, their efforts have been Sisyphean: they spend vast amounts of capital pushing a stone uphill which, when it rolls back down, crushes the morale of reformers while reinforcing the hegemony of those who defend the status quo. The problem is that proponents are trying to sell one possible way of paying for something without ever describing what that something is. What that something is is putting parents in charge.

The powerful interests that work so tirelessly to maintain the failed system claim that fundamental changes would be too difficult and too disruptive. We should not let them get away with that argument. Of course there will be debates about the best method of paying for education when parents are put in charge. We would all continue to chip in with our tax dollars, and, given the progressive nature of our tax code, some would pay a great deal, some a little, some not at all. The government would continue to be the collection agent but not the sole supplier of the product. Instead, there would be multiple qualified suppliers—including the government. Parents would be free to choose among these suppliers and funding would be allocated on the basis of their choices.

Different states may choose to implement the specifics of this program differently. Frankly, overcoming the technical difficulties of funding will be far easier than overcoming the inertia, conventional wisdom, and the entrenched interests opposed to change. What will be required is nothing less than an awakening on a par with the great civil rights struggle of a half century ago. As Martin Luther King III has argued, putting parents in charge of their children's education is perhaps the last great civil rights issue—and it is an idea whose time has come.

This is not a Republican idea, or a Democratic idea. It's an American idea. Throughout our history people have defended the rights of ordinary Americans to make decisions, large and small, in their own lives. The right to sit where they want on a bus, and not be forced to the back. The right to sit at a lunch counter of a particular restaurant, and not be forced to patronize only the ones that accept "their kind."

The exercise of these rights runs the gamut from the simple to the profound. But what could be more simple—and more profound—than the right to have a say in where your children go to school, who teaches them, and what they learn? If you're affluent, you can buy this right, but not if you're poor. The denial of this basic right, this fundamental choice, has no place in a country that prides itself on its democracy and free market. This contradiction cannot be justified, and should no longer be tolerated.

Theodore Forstmann *is founder and president of the Children's Scholarship Fund. His most recent initiative is Parents in Charge (www.parentsincharge.org), an organization that promotes parental choice in education.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Passing of R. J. Rushdoony

William Edgar

Rousas John Rushdoony died on February 8 of this year, at the age of eighty-four. He was the founder, president, and chairman of the Chalcedon Foundation, which holds conferences and publishes both a journal by the same name and the *Chalcedon Report*, a monthly magazine with articles on every subject imaginable. All these efforts are meant to advance the view that Christian faith is for all of life. The name of the foundation is taken from the great ecclesiastical council of 451 that produced the formula that Christ was God of very God and man of very Man—an affirmation which for Rushdoony meant that no human power could make claims to divinity. A lifelong enemy of socialism, Rushdoony believed it had usurped the unique authority of Jesus Christ.

I first encountered Rushdoony at L'Abri, a Christian community high in the Swiss Alps. The year was 1964. Francis Schaeffer, the founder and director of L'Abri, had recently come across a little book by Rushdoony called *This Independent Republic: Studies in the Nature and Meaning of American History*, and he made it the basis for a seminar with the students at L'Abri. We gathered in the living room of Chalet les Mélèzes, where most of the community's meetings were held. It was before Schaeffer became a popular sage for many evangelical Christians, and so we could study such a text informally, though we always did so with care.

The topics covered in the Rushdoony book were wide-ranging. The chapter that Schaeffer chose for the subject of his seminar focused on the difference between the American and the French Revolutions. Drawing on scholars such as Peter Drucker and James C. Malin, Rushdoony challenged the propriety of calling America's defensive war against Great Britain a true revolution. According to him it was instead a "conservative counterrevolution," whose purpose was to preserve American liberties from their usurpation by the British Parliament. It owed nothing to the Enlightenment. By contrast, the French Revolution was the direct result of the Enlightenment, along with the organizational strategies fostered by various secret and esoteric societies.

Though at the time I was too much a novice in history to judge the accuracy of his thesis, I was drawn to the clarity and cogency of Rushdoony's arguments. Those were heady days at L'Abri, which in the sixties was a seedbed for ideas that captivated our imaginations and sought to link every area of our lives to a Christian worldview. A Christian historiography containing such a powerful critique of the point of view most of us received in school was for me a great stimulation. Rushdoony taught us that the American Constitution, with its eloquent absence of references to Christian faith, was a secular document only in appearance. In fact, it was deliberately fashioned as a minimalist document by men of genius whose primary purpose was to ensure the vitality of local government. Here Rushdoony added a distinctive perspective, one which would become a leitmotif throughout his long career, and one which would have a wide impact on other figures in his circle.

In Rushdoony's view, the Constitution did not need to include a Christian confession because the states were already a Christian establishment or settlement. The First Amendment prohibited laws respecting the establishment of religion because religion was already established at the local level. There were sabbath rules, religious tests for citizenship, laws regarding heterosexual fidelity, blasphemy laws—all of them strongly connected to biblical law. The First Amendment was intended to protect the states from interference by the federal government.

Central to just about every one of Rushdoony's writings is the notion that freedom must be preserved at the local level, so that God's law can be faithfully obeyed by all people, without interference from higher temporal powers. America held a special place in world history for him because it began as a Christian civic structure. And yet, in our time it desperately needed to regain its original vision. More than anything else, America had to "press the crown rights of Jesus Christ in all spheres of life," as the Chalcedon slogan has it.

"Rush," as he was known by his friends and colleagues, believed that he was laying the foundations for a reformation. Born in 1917 in New York City to recent Armenian immigrants from Turkey, Rushdoony was educated in California, where he eventually established his residence. He spent over eight years as a missionary to Shoshone and Paiute Native Americans in Nevada. Before serving two churches in Santa Cruz, casting his lot with separatist Presbyterians, he followed the lead of J. Gresham Machen, who left Princeton Theological Seminary in 1929 to found Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, and eventually helped to form the American Presbyterian Church (now the Orthodox Presbyterian Church).

Though Rushdoony did not attend Westminster himself, he was strongly influenced by its famous professor of apologetics, Cornelius Van Til. Van Til had argued that there was a fundamental difference in the way unbelievers and believers reasoned because their source of authority was radically different. On this basis

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he reproached traditional apologetics, represented for example by Thomas Aquinas and Bishop Joseph Butler, for allowing commonly held, neutral standards to become the warrant for the truth of Christian faith rather than the standards revealed by God in the world, in human consciousness, and in Scripture.

Rushdoony focused on the same problematic in his own work, although his approach to it was, if anything, more radical. For Rushdoony, the fundamental gulf that separates truth from error can be bridged only by allowing the light of God to penetrate every aspect of our lives. His opposition to secular premises was total.

Many have credited Rushdoony with being an early inspiration behind the home school movement. He certainly was the strongest possible advocate of religious education, consistently favoring private over public schooling. In *The Messianic Character of American Education* (1963) Rushdoony decried the American public school system, tracing its ideology back to John Dewey and other secular thinkers who believed in the natural goodness of children and the role that education could play in liberalizing society.

Rushdoony was often called upon as an expert witness to defend the rights of home-school advocates against their detractors. In 1983 the Home School Legal Defense Association was formed under the leadership of people inspired by Rushdoony's attacks on secular education. By 1990 over fifteen thousand families in all fifty states belonged to the Association, and today home schooling is more popular than ever.

The movement inspired by R. J. Rushdoony is often given the label Theonomy. The term should not be confused with Paul Tillich's concept of the same name, which was meant to be a corrective to idolatry through an appeal to "autonomous reason." Rather, Rushdoony's Theonomy involves the application of the law of God, and the biblical law particularly, to all of life. It also requires that one appeal to the whole law of God—including the civil law of the Old Testament—as a necessary supplement to being saved by grace through faith. Some of Rushdoony's followers prefer the term "reconstructionist," because they believe it does a better job of conveying their positive outlook on life. Indeed, their view of the future could be described as postmillennial, since they tend to believe that God's Kingdom will eventually be established on earth through the faithful preaching of the gospel and the faithful application of God's law to society. The result will be a Christian civilization and a thousand year reign of Jesus Christ.

Rushdoony's most extensive and thorough treatment of the law can be found in his *Institutes of Biblical Law*, a massive, two-volume work that includes an exhaustive study of the Ten Commandments followed by detailed treatments of taxation, government, virtue, oaths, penal sanctions, property, and nearly every domain of jurisprudence. The book opens, tellingly, with a quote from Wycliffe about his translation of the Bible: "This Bible is for the government of the people, by the people, and for the people." Also revealing is the fact that Rushdoony's *Institutes*—despite the reference to Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in its title—reproaches the reformer for refusing to advocate the complete submission of the state to the Mosaic law.

There is no denying that these 1,600 pages show Rushdoony to have been a man of extraordinary brilliance possessing an almost encyclopedic knowledge of human affairs. It is truly a work of Protestant casuistry. At the same time, these pages tend to confirm the accusations of harshness often brought against Rushdoony. His *Institutes* conveys a stern message, and one senses in it a certain deficit of grace and forgiveness.

Rushdoony and his followers have always considered themselves to be at war with antinomianism in any form. They are convinced that European and North American Christians have been afflicted by a belief in what can only be called cheap grace. In response to this situation, they have taught that when Jesus said he came "not to abolish the law but to fulfill it" (Matthew 5:17), he meant to ratify the law—to establish it—not to surpass it. The fact remains, however, that Jesus announced he was not here "to abolish the law and the prophets . . . but to fulfill them," something far more extensive than mere ratification. The Sermon on the Mount, from which this quote is derived, goes on to explicate how the law's message had been distorted by the scribes and lawyers of Israel who followed it to the letter but missed its deepest meaning. Genuine Christian piety requires that we take a more expansive—a less narrowly political and punitive—view of the law. Only then will the door of heaven be opened, and the Heavenly Father provide graciously all things needful (Matthew 6:32; 7:7-11).

It is difficult to say how much influence R. J. Rushdoony will ultimately have. The brilliant Greg Bahnsen and the fiery Pat Robertson are among his many admirers. Bill Moyers has produced a PBS documentary on Rushdoony that was widely praised. Theonomy has many champions from quite diverse quarters around the world. Although Rushdoony's particular brand of reconstruction may not much outlast his death, it will continue to appeal to some. For the antinomianism of our world is very much in need of being resisted, even if Rushdoony's own response to it resulted, in the end, in a severe overcorrection.

William Edgar *is Professor of Apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Auden and the Limits of Poetry

Alan Jacobs

By the mid-1930s W. H. Auden was the most famous and most widely imitated young poet in England. His verse was brilliant, ironic, often funny, wide-ranging in its reference—equally at home in the worlds of Anglo-Saxon heroic poetry and the technology of mining—and sometimes impenetrably obscure. His poetic voice was from the beginning so distinctive that in 1933, when Auden was just twenty-six years old, Graham Greene could employ the word "Audenesque" in a movie review, confident that readers would know what he meant. The phrase "the Auden age" was in use before the poet turned thirty. But this widely recognized leader of the British intellectual avant-garde was an unhappy and confused young man.

Auden had been unable to believe in God since his adolescence. His loss of faith and his discovery of poetry had come, interestingly enough, at almost the same time. But in the late thirties, as Auden's uncertainty about his role as a poet grew (along with political and social tensions in Europe) some odd things began to happen to him. When in Spain during that country's Civil War, for instance, he was shocked and disturbed to see that supporters of the Republican cause had closed or burned many of Barcelona's churches—but he could not account for his own reaction. Soon afterward, he met the English writer and editor Charles Williams, and felt himself to be "in the presence of personal sanctity"—though what sanctity meant in a world without God he could not say.

In December 1939 Auden had his most decisive experience of this kind. He went to a theater in what was then a German-speaking section of Manhattan to see a newsreel about the German invasion of Poland, which had occurred three months before. But it was not the film so much as the audience that Auden later remembered. Whenever the Poles appeared on the screen—as prisoners, of course, in the hands of the Wehrmacht—members of the audience would shout in German, "Kill them! Kill them!" Auden was stunned. "There was no hypocrisy," he recalled many years later: these people were unashamed of their feelings and attempted to put no "civilized" face upon them. "I wondered, then, why I reacted as I did against this denial of every humanistic value." On what grounds did he have a right to demand, or even a reason to expect, a more "humanistic" response? His inability to answer this question, he explained much later, "brought me back to the Church." By the fall of 1940 he was going to church again, for the first time since childhood, and would affirm the Christian faith for the rest of his days.

However, the many readers who have rejoiced in the work of Auden's fellow British Christians, the Inklings—Lewis, Tolkien, Charles Williams, and (peripheral to their circle) Dorothy Sayers—have paid little attention to this remarkable man or the extraordinary work that emerged from his embrace of the Christian faith. This is, as we shall see, an understandable but deeply lamentable state of affairs.

Edward Mendelson's marvelous recent book about Auden (*Later Auden*, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 570 pp., $30) ends with the words, "and his work was done." This conclusion provides the key to understanding Mendelson's project not only in this book but also in its predecessor, 1981's *Early Auden*. In these two rich and resourceful volumes, Mendelson has written the definitive account of one of the greatest poetic careers of the last century. The story he tells is not the story of Auden's life in the usual sense of the word, though all elements of that life naturally enter into the story;

Alan Jacobs *is Professor of English at Wheaton College.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rather, he narrates for us the complex and fascinating history of a body of work, the fruit of a calling. Mendelson gives us the biography of Auden's vocation.

Not long after he began writing poetry at age fifteen, Auden came to understand that words were the medium in which he should work. But who or what imposed this "should" upon him? And how should he use the words he was called upon to use? In *Early Auden*—which began with Auden's first adult poems, written in 1927 when he was twenty years old, and ended with his leaving England in January 1939—Mendelson traced Auden's oscillations among several divergent and probably irreconcilable descriptions of the poet: conjurer, teacher, servant, prophet, redeemer. *Later Auden* begins with the poet in a new land, a place famous for encouraging new beginnings. When, with his friend Christopher Isherwood, Auden boarded a ship for America, he was the most celebrated young poet in England, but he knew that his career was at an impasse. All of the models for the writing life which he had tried out in the previous decade had come to seem empty, sterile, and in some cases repulsive. But he had no idea what could replace them. The germ of a new understanding, Mendelson shows, can be found in a word that Auden began using just before he left England: he said that the poet had a gift.

The presence of a gift implies the activity of a giver. But who, or what, gives the gift of poetry? Auden's conversion, less than two years later, indicated that he had found an answer to that question. But Auden's conversion did not resolve his puzzlement about his life as a poet: What should he do with the gift that God had given him? During the war years, from his apartment in New York, his pursuit of an answer to that question led him upon a remarkable intellectual and spiritual journey. In reviews and essays commissioned by major American periodicals, he would explore thinkers and ideas that he hoped would help him figure out what he was supposed to do, as a poet and a man: he considered Kierkegaard, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Paul Tillich, along with a host of less well-known figures like the historian Charles Norris Cochrane and, a little later on, the polymathic but eccentric philosopher-historian Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy.

As Mendelson demonstrates, Auden's essays and reviews consistently depicted these figures as having some significant contribution to make to the interpretation of Western culture at that particular and terrible moment. But in the poems Auden was writing at the same time, Mendelson convincingly argues, he was preoccupied with the questions he could not answer, with the doubts that even the greatest of his intellectual helpers left unassuaged. Among these poems are some of Auden's finest achievements, including the three long poems he wrote between 1941 and 1947, "For the Time Being: A Christmas Oratorio," "The Sea and the Mirror: A Commentary on *The Tempest*," and "The Age of Anxiety: a Baroque Eclogue." The first and last of these, Mendelson contends, have brilliant passages but are flawed in either their concept or execution; and even the masterful "The Sea and the Mirror" fails to offer a clear and satisfying account of the problem it sets out to address, namely, whether art can have spiritual significance. (Auden told his friend Ursula Niebuhr—the wife of Reinhold—that the poem was "really about the Christian conception of art.")

Mendelson fully recognizes the greatness of this poem, and the extraordinarily intelligent ambitions of the other two. His point is not that the poems are less than they could have been, but rather that none of them satisfied its author. In the thirties, Auden had nurtured hopes that the poet might be a prophet to—or even a redeemer of—a sick and chaotic society. In the aftermath of his conversion, his thinking dominated by what he later called a "neo-Calvinist (i.e., Barthian) exaggeration of God's transcendence," he found poetry valuable only when it acknowledged its hopeless, incompetent distance from anything true or good that it tried to represent.

One sees this notion vividly illustrated in one of the concluding speeches of "The Sea and the Mirror," a poem that adapts and transforms various elements of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. In this passage, Auden's Caliban explains what he thinks to be the only kind of situation in which the artist receives any genuine illumination. He asks us to imagine "the greatest grandest opera rendered by a very provincial touring company indeed." Paradoxically, it is the very poverty and ineptitude of the production that makes it valuable to its actors, for even though "there was not a single aspect of our whole performance, not even the huge stuffed bird of happiness, for which a kind word could, however patronizingly, be said," nevertheless it is "at this very moment [that] we do at last see ourselves as we are." And, more important, "for the first time in our lives we hear . . . the real Word which is our only raison d'être." At the moment when all pretense to aesthetic achievement helplessly falls away, and the actors are confronted with the authentic selves which they had used their performances to escape, they come to see God precisely in their distance from Him:

> . . . we are blessed with that Wholly Other Life from which we are separated by an essential emphatic gulf of which our contrived fissures of mirror and proscenium arch—we understand them at last—are feebly figurative signs. . . . It is just here, among the ruins and the bones, that we may rejoice in the perfected Work that is not ours.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Similarly, Auden's Prospero, musing on the kind of life he will live after giving up his magical powers, says "I never dreamed the way of truth / Was a way of silence." But if Prospero is right, what can the poet do except stop writing? One suspects that at this point in his career Auden was contemplating just that—that is, making his adaptation of *The Tempest* his farewell to poetry, just as *The Tempest* itself has always been read as Shakespeare's (and not just Prospero's) farewell to the dramatic arts. And yet, Auden continued to believe that poetry was the vocation to which he had been called, not just by his temperament or aptitudes, but by God himself, "the author and giver of all good things" (as he wrote in a 1940 poem). But how, given the incapacity of language to grasp the most important things in and beyond this world, could he fulfill that calling?

In thinking through this problem, Auden gained insight from Kierkegaard; he found especially useful the Danish thinker's notion of "indirect communication." (This is a theme that Mendelson makes too little of, but since almost every other critic of Auden has made too much of it, the fault is easily pardonable.) Many of Kierkegaard's works—in fact, all of his most famous ones—are not explicitly Christian. Such books are easily identifiable because Kierkegaard did not sign his name to them: they appeared under various pseudonyms. These works approach the questions with which Christianity is most concerned, but they do not offer Christian answers to those questions; indeed, their failure to produce compelling responses is just what leads the reader toward the Christian faith that alone can provide what we need. "An illusion can never be destroyed directly," Kierkegaard wrote, "and only by indirect means can it be radically removed."

Auden adopted this approach, and adapted it to his poetic needs. In the great poems of his maturity, Christianity appears as the missing piece of the puzzle, the answer to a question no one thought to ask. In "The Shield of Achilles," for instance—one of the greatest poems of the twentieth century—the blacksmith god Hephaestos, watched by Achilles' mother Thetis, portrays our world as it appears to the carnal eye, the eye unillumined by faith. He inscribes on the shield "three pale figures" being bound to three posts; the poem indicates their condition:

The mass and majesty of this world, all
That carries weight and always weighs the same
Lay in the hands of others; they were small
And could not hope for help and no help came:
What their foes liked to do was done, their shame
Was all the worst could wish; they lost their pride
And died as men before their bodies died.

A little later we see another figure:

A ragged urchin, aimless and alone,
Loitered about that vacancy; a bird
Flew up to safety from his well-aimed stone:
That girls are raped, that two boys knife a third,
Were axioms to him, who'd never heard
Of any world where promises were kept,
Or one could weep because another wept.

In the Christian understanding, we indeed live in a world where such events occur. But the cold eye of Hephaestos, while it sees with terrifying clarity, is blind to some things: that one of those three bound figures may be different than the other two; that somewhere promises are kept; and that people weep with their brothers and sisters who weep. In Auden's poem the Christian interpretation of history is evoked all the more powerfully by its absence: the indirect communication of "The Shield of Achilles" has a force more overt testimonials often lack.

The Christian faith helped Auden to keep writing in another way as well, by offering him—though not immediately, and not without years of profound study and reflection—a way of comprehending a problem that had obsessed him for many years: the relationship between freedom and necessity. In almost every major poem he wrote after coming to America, says Mendelson, Auden in some way "incorporated the significant events of his life. But he confronted each time a new variation on his inner debate: whether those events were better understood as the product of involuntary necessity or of free choice." Mendelson begins his book by reflecting on this obsession of Auden's, and one of the great achievements of *Later Auden* is the skillful patience and critical tact with which he explores Auden's changing views on this vital subject.

Auden came to formulate the problem in this way: alone among the creatures, human beings live in history as well as in nature. In the natural world all obey the laws that govern their being; only we make choices and live out the consequences of them. That's what history means. In a lovely poem called "Their Lonely Betters," Auden sits in a chair in his garden, listens, and thinks about what he hears:

A robin with no Christian name ran through
The Robin-Anthem which was all it knew,
And rustling flowers for some third party waited
To say which pairs, if any, should get mated.

Not one of them was capable of lying,
There was not one which knew that it was dying

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Or could have with a rhythm or a rhyme
Assumed responsibility for time.

Let them leave language to their lonely betters
Who count some days and long for certain letters;
We, too, make noises when we laugh or weep:
Words are for those with promises to keep.

The robin cannot decide what song to sing; the flowers cannot select their mates. These creatures, living wholly in nature, neither celebrate the wisdom nor lament the folly of their choices, for they have no choices to make. We, on the other hand, must and do choose, and thereby enter into the historical world of accountability ("responsibility for time"). We know what it means to have "promises to keep"—and what it means to break them.

But we are not just historical beings. We are also participants in nature, and in that sense we too are part of the Creation. And Mendelson shows, as no other critic has yet shown, how Auden came to wrestle with—and ultimately to accept, with gratitude—the limits and circumscriptions of our natural, our bodily, lives.

I have said that Auden was deeply influenced by Kierkegaard, but he gradually came to understand that there were some valuable and necessary things that Kierkegaard didn't understand. Late in his life, Auden would write of Kierkegaard that, "like all heretics, conscious or unconscious, he is a monodist, who can hear with particular acuteness one theme in the New Testament—in his case, the theme of suffering and self-sacrifice—but is deaf to its rich polyphony. . . . The Passion of Christ was to Kierkegaard's taste, the Nativity and Epiphany were not." Auden contends that, while Kierkegaard's consciously held beliefs were scrupulously orthodox, he was "in his sensibility" a Manichee, who felt strongly the evil and degradation of matter, of our bodies. Indeed, Auden wrote in another essay, with pardonable exaggeration, "A planetary visitor might read through the whole of his voluminous works without discovering that human beings are not ghosts but have bodies of flesh and blood." And to have bodies of flesh and blood is to live in the world of nature's necessity as well as in the world of history, of existential choice.

Auden thus increasingly came to believe that we are emphatically compound beings, subject always to natural laws and yet called upon to "assume responsibility for time" by making decisions—decisions whose inevitable consequences are yet another form of necessity. For Auden, this peculiar situation is, above all, comic. There is something intrinsically funny about our mixed identity, as we try to exercise Divine powers of decision and yet always find our bodies getting in the way. "A sense of humor develops in a society to the degree that its members are simultaneously conscious of being each a unique person and of being all in common subjection to unalterable laws." And this sense of humor about one's condition is for Auden absolutely necessary to spiritual health. He may have dreamed in his youth of redeeming the world through his poetic power or being destroyed in the effort, but as an older man he found himself, as he often remarked, just a "martyr to corns," which afflicted his feet and made him comfortable only in carpet slippers.

By the 1950s most of the people who had admired the young Auden had rejected his mature poetry as trivial. But the heart of Mendelson's book, in many respects, is his demonstration that in this later poetry Auden is working "at the height of his powers," though in a poetic idiom that was incomprehensible to those who loved the gnomic and hieratic pronouncements of Auden's earlier verse. In 1948, Mendelson notes, Auden

> began to write poems about the inarticulate human body . . . : the body that never asks to be regimented or idealized, feels no abstract hatred or intellectual envy, believes no theories, and is moved by impulses that, fortunately for us, are not exactly the same as our own. He dedicated to the body some of his most profound poems, works whose depth and breadth have been underestimated because their treatment of their subject matter was novel and unexpected in an age whose writers hesitated to see the body as "simply, publicly, there." And because he learned to value the body as sacred in itself, Auden learned to believe in it as the means and promise of salvation.

"Means" is perhaps not quite right. It is not through the body that we are saved, but we are saved as embodied creatures, and saved for a future of embodiment. Auden came to believe the doctrine of the resurrection of the body a vital one and a necessary corrective to the implicit Gnosticism and Manicheanism of his existentialist influences. But Mendelson's argument is compelling, and if there is any justice in the world it will put an end to the ill-informed dismissals of Auden's later verse.

Auden's poems about the body are often poems of gratitude and thanksgiving. In a poem dedicated to his senses, "Precious Five," he concludes by invoking

That singular command
I do not understand,
Bless what there is for being,
Which has to be obeyed, for
What else am I made for,
Agreeing or disagreeing?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In one sense this recurrent emphasis on blessing and thankfulness is a correction of the theology that dominated Auden's early years as a Christian. I have already noted how important for Auden was Kierkegaard's statement that "before God we are always in the wrong." In that movie theater in Manhattan, Auden confronted his own infinite capacity for sinfulness as well as that of the Germans. One of Auden's friends relates that he taught Sunday School in 1942, and once asked the class, "Do you know what the Devil looks like?" He then answered his own question: "The Devil looks like me." Not too long afterward, he wrote of his conviction that Jesus is Lord: "I believe because he fulfills none of my dreams, because he is in every respect the opposite of what he would be if I could have made him in my own image." But why not one of the other great teachers, like Buddha or Muhammad? Because, Auden wrote, chillingly, "none of the others arouse all sides of my being to cry 'Crucify Him.'" Auden never rejected this deep conviction of his depravity, but he came to realize that if he tried to build his whole theology around it he would become, like Kierkegaard, a "monodist" and an inadvertent heretic. Thus the necessary poems of praise and thanksgiving.

It is in light of this sought theological balance that we may best understand Auden's sequence of poems "Horae Canonicae," based on the "canonical hours" that govern time in monastic communities and many churches. These poems have rarely been given serious attention, but Mendelson points out that they "occupied [Auden's] attention longer than any other" work of his career—seven years, off and on—and believes that they constitute "arguably his greatest work." In these poems, some of which are deceptively casual in tone, Auden attempts to do no less than to encompass self-censure and gratitude, necessity and freedom.

The first poem, "Prime," begins with an awakening. In this first preconscious moment of opening eyes Auden is (as we all are) an "Adam still previous to any act"; but he is also (as we all are) "Afraid of our living task, the dying / Which the coming day will ask." In the next poem he speaks of "our victim," the one who will do the dying, the one who "knows that by sundown / We shall have had a good Friday." Writes Mendelson, "The day in which the events [of this sequence] occur is Good Friday, and also any day; and the place where they occur is Jerusalem with its law court and temple, and also the Italian fishing village where the poems were written, or anywhere." This juxtaposition of times and situations is made possible by the understanding of time embodied in the canonical hours. In them, as in the larger calendar of the church year, unrepeatable events (the pronouncement of judgment, the Crucifixion, the deposition from the Cross) are remembered and in a sense reenacted. But of course this remembrance is done day after day, year after year, according to the necessary rhythms of the seasons and our bodies. Thus the sequence ends, not with the evening prayer of "Compline," but with "Lauds," the song of another morning.

This second morning song not only emphasizes the repetitive nature of bodily actions, including worship, but also indicates, in Mendelson's eloquent words, the blessed movement "from fatal memory to unconditional hope."

> This is no transcendent escape from the physical world but an undignified, saving scramble back into it. In imagining it, [Auden] found himself at home not only in both his work and his body—their reconciliation is one of the private achievements of the poem—but also in the double world of nature and history, neither an imaginary past nor a visionary future, but the place he lived now.

Only if we live in the world where God has placed us can we fulfill the vocations to which He has called us.

Why are Christians so indifferent to Auden? It is a question made compelling by Mendelson's brilliant and sympathetic analysis. It is certainly true that Auden is not nearly as accessible a writer as Lewis, Tolkien, Sayers, or Charles Williams. Neither, however, is T. S. Eliot, and yet Eliot continues to hold a totemic status for Christians interested in modern literature, while Auden is almost completely neglected. This state of affairs bears reflection.

The first problem is an obvious one: throughout Auden's life he was a practicing homosexual. After his conversion to Christianity, such sexual activity became problematic for him. His good friend Christopher Isherwood wrote of Auden's attitude toward his homosexuality that "his religion condemned it and he agreed that it was sinful, though he fully intended to go on sinning."

This is only partly right. In a letter to Isherwood—a letter that may have been the source of Isherwood's comment—Auden wrote, "Though I believe it sinful to be queer, it has at least saved me from becoming a pillar of the Establishment." The comment is illuminating. Auden tried to resist his sexual temptations, but felt them to be stronger than he was. In one poem he ruefully echoes a famous prayer of Augustine's, writing "I am sorry I'm not sorry . . . / Make me chaste, Lord, but not yet." But his determination to "bless what there is for being" led him to seek ways to be grateful to God even for his sins and afflictions, through which he believed God to work for His own purposes. Hence his thankfulness not to have become an Establishment fig-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ure. He also believed that the homosexual was less likely to engage in the idolatry of eros that is so common among heterosexuals. In his view his sexuality was, therefore, an affliction that bore the seeds of potential blessings.

But however complex Auden's attitude toward these matters, the mere fact that he was homosexual has written him off the books of many Christians—even Christians who are quick to forgive C. S. Lewis' peculiar liaison with Mrs. Moore, or Charles Williams' penchant for spanking and being spanked by young women. The Christian world has its hierarchy of sins, and may be right in its judgments. But it is singularly unfortunate that, even if we have judged Auden's sins rightly, we should allow that judgment to stand in the way of learning from the wisdom contained in his writings.

In any case, homosexuality alone is not enough to explain the Christian neglect of Auden. More important, perhaps, is his Kierkegaardian emphasis on indirect communication. This emphasis stemmed from Auden's determination to repent of his, and his fellow poets', prideful assertions of their own importance. But Christian readers, for the most part, don't want their poets to be humble: being somewhat Romantic in taste, they tend to prefer their poets to be seers, prophets, "unacknowledged legislators of the world" (as Shelley put it)—just as long as they are Christian seers, prophets, legislators. As they often say, they like poems that are "redemptive." But Auden understood that nothing and no one is redemptive except Jesus Christ—and thus he called Shelley's famous line "the silliest remark ever made about poets." As he wrote to Clio, the mythological Muse of History,

Approachable as you seem,
I dare not ask you if you bless the poets,
For you do not look as if you ever read them,
Nor can I see a reason why you should.

He sent this poem to J. R. R. Tolkien, and in an accompanying letter referred to it as "a hymn to Our Lady." Mary, as the mother of Christ, presides over the world's moments of ultimate significance: What can poetry add to the Incarnation or the Passion of our Lord?

Auden consistently repudiated the notion that poetry has any privileged access to truth, any especially sanctified role to play. Poetry was certainly his vocation, and he loved it. As Mendelson writes, "Vocation, for Auden, is the most innocent form of love, a voluntary loss of self in an object." He knew he would be wrong not to love his work, not to achieve what he called "that eye-on-the-object look" characteristic of people who are "forgetting themselves in a function." But he would never claim that his calling was superior to any other. In this sense he was purely Lutheran, emphasizing the dignity of every calling before God. It is not surprising that he wrote a poem based on the medieval legend of *le jongleur de Dieu*, the poor "clown of God" who can offer nothing to the Christ Child but his juggling—and whose offering is received, not because it has special value, but because he gave what he had to give.

As a result of this penitential humility, Auden came to insist over and over again that one cannot in poetry speak the Truth directly and unequivocally. In one of his most powerful poems, "Friday's Child," he remembers, in a characteristically oblique way, the martyr's death of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. (The title is typical of Auden's approach: he trusts us to remember that "Friday's child is loving and giving," and trusts us also to understand that the old Mother Goose rhyme draws on the memory of Good Friday, when God loved and gave most fully.) The poem concludes with an invocation, and a recommendation, of silence in the face of an evil that cannot be comprehended and a faith that, as Kierkegaard said, can be neither explained nor justified:

Now, did He really break the seal
And rise again? We dare not say;
But conscious unbelievers feel
Quite sure of Judgment Day.

Meanwhile, a silence on the cross
As dead as we shall ever be,
Speaks of some total gain or loss,
And you and I are free

To guess from the insulted face
Just what Appearances He saves
By suffering in a public place
A death reserved for slaves.

The key phrase here, I believe, is "We dare not say." It is not the same as "We dare not believe"—though Auden often confessed in his later years to dark times of doubt—nor does it mean "We dare not proclaim," since undoubtedly Auden often did proclaim, in church at least, "On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures." Auden's "we" does not refer to Christians, but to poets, whose tendency (as he writes in another poem) to "utter some resonant lie" makes them unfit bearers of the gospel proclamation. As Auden said repeatedly, almost obsessively, "Orthodoxy is reticence"; orthodoxy is knowing when to shut up. This is not a teaching that many Christian readers want to hear from their poets. But Auden knew what poetry can't do, and always felt the need to put himself and other poets in their proper place. Thus the wittily self-deflating question in "Compline": "Can poets (can men in television) / Be saved?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Late in his life, he said in a lecture that he and his "fellow-citizens of the Republic of Letters"—a phrase coined by Voltaire—had but one "political duty": "To love the Word and defend it against its enemies." And who or what are those enemies? The "principal enemies of the True Word are two: the Idle Word and the Black Magician." On the one hand, he came to see much of his early poetry as intolerably careless not only in its technique but in its disregard for whether it meant what it said. It was full of idle words. But the other enemy was more dangerous still. The Black Magician encourages poets to believe that they can be prophets and redeemers. Or, as Auden put it once in a review, he tries to make a person attempt "to do for himself or others by the writing of poetry what can only be done in some other way, by action, or study, or prayer." Auden uses poetry to remind us of what poetry can never give us. But, in the end, this assigns poetry a genuine and important role, as it points always beyond itself in a strangely mute witness to that of which it is unable definitively to speak. As Auden wrote in one of his later poems,

We can only
do what it seems to us we were made for, look at
this world with a happy eye
but from a sober perspective. FT

Choice

Extra place set at your mind's table
like Ezekiel's: empty glass, clean spoon.

Hands that never pointed out the moon,
laid the baby in the Christmas stable,

dried dishes. Voice that doesn't call
downstairs that he or she will be there

soon. In steam behind a bathroom door,
no one puts on makeup, leaves a towel

for you to find. No hairdryer.
No C in French. No midnight curfew,

no slamming door, no not-speaking-to.
When was it you began to hear

silence? They don't tell you
about that voice, clear, insistent, steady

as a heartbeat, asking, *How weren't you ready?*

Sally Thomas

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Last Liberal

James Nuechterlein

The history of liberalism in our times is not, for liberals, a happy one. Modern liberalism originated in the first third of the twentieth century, dominated the middle third, and then all but came apart in the final third.

The simplest indicator of that decline is the flight from the term itself. Franklin Roosevelt, frustrated over the connivance of Southern Democrats with Republicans in defeating New Deal measures, expressed the desire that party alignments might more precisely follow liberal/conservative lines. He assumed, it is clear, that an arrangement that consistently matched liberal Democrats against conservative Republicans would result not only in a more rational politics but also in perpetual Democratic supremacy. Conservatives implicitly conceded the point. When Dwight Eisenhower midway through his presidency told a gathering of Republicans that they should not be afraid of the term "conservative," he was thought courageous, even foolhardy, for his daring.

Not that long afterwards, matters had turned upside down. Lyndon Johnson's landslide victory over Barry Goldwater in 1964 appeared to mark the fulfillment of FDR's dream, but just a few years later the Great Society, riven with conflict over the Vietnam War and racial unrest, self-destructed virtually overnight. Liberalism has never recovered from that debacle. Politicians of progressive tendencies fled from the "L" word, while Republicans, flaunting their conservatism, won five of the next six presidential elections, losing only to Jimmy Carter in 1976 in the wake of the Watergate scandal.

Bill Clinton, a Southern moderate, recovered the presidency for the Democrats, but he never ran as a liberal. Indeed, he famously proclaimed the end of the era of big government—and big government had been what liberalism was most fundamentally about. Even so, after the 2000 election, the Republicans—unashamedly (if compassionately) conservative—controlled, for the first time in almost a half century, both Congress and the White House.

But if liberalism, or at least liberalism as it was generally understood from the Progressive era up through the Great Society, has fallen on lean days, not everyone has given up the faith. Its adherents make up an aging congregation, consisting mainly of those who came to maturity in liberalism's glory years, 1933-1945, the era of the New Deal and World War II. Of those who still practice the Old Religion, no one is more steadfast, or more engaging in its defense, than Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., who helped write its history even as he was expounding and refining its doctrine. His memoir, *A Life in the Twentieth Century: Innocent Beginnings, 1917-1950* (Houghton Mifflin, 557 pp., $28.95), provides a lively and elegant apology worth the attention even of those who find baffling the author's unshakable and unquestioned commitment to liberal orthodoxy.

The simplest and truest thing to say about Schlesinger is that he is thoroughly his father's son. The memoir is suffused with a warm, unforced filial piety. The senior Arthur Maier Schlesinger was himself a successful American historian whose teaching career took him from brief stints at Ohio State and Iowa to a long tenure at Harvard. (The history gene was apparently matrilineal as well: family lore had it that Elizabeth Bancroft Schlesinger was a descendant of the great nineteenth-century whig-progressive historian and ardent Jacksonian Democrat George Bancroft.) From his father the young Schlesinger inherited not simply his professional bent but his general approach to polit-

JAMES NUECHTERLEIN *is Editor of* FIRST THINGS.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ical life. Father and son alike were utterly dismissive of conservatism, drawn enough to radicalism to flirt with a mild socialism (though never for a moment susceptible to communism), most at home in a social democratic left-liberalism. The most striking evidence of Schlesinger's devotion to his father is his name: at his birth on October 15, 1917, his parents named him Arthur Bancroft Schlesinger, but at about age fourteen—the age at which most young men enter on a period of adolescent rebellion against their fathers—Schlesinger decided quite on his own that he would henceforth be Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.

Interestingly, Schlesinger was perhaps least like his father in his approach to history. The elder Schlesinger was an advocate of the New History—an early version of social history most closely identified with James Harvey Robinson—while his son became a master of the old-fashioned analytical narrative focused on traditional political events and leaders. In discussing his father's career, Schlesinger is admirably delicate. He praises his father's accomplishments while noting only by indirection his relative lack of scholarly productivity. (The senior Schlesinger, to his ultimate regret, edited more volumes of history than he wrote.) The fact is that the son outstripped the father professionally by a considerable margin, but if that ever complicated their mutual high regard there is no evidence of it here.

The deep love lavished on Schlesinger by both his parents got him through the storms of childhood and adolescence relatively unscathed. (He is reticent about his relations with his brother Thomas, five years his junior, who is scarcely present in these pages.) Those years, first in the Midwest and, beginning at age seven, in Cambridge, could not have been entirely easy. A precocious student, Schlesinger skipped the second and fourth grades, which put him socially and physically behind his classmates, and he suffered both from poor eyesight, which required thick glasses, and, later, poor complexion. Still, he remembers his childhood as a "generally sunny time." Much of his time he spent in reading. Even with allowance for his precocity, Schlesinger was a voracious, and attentive, reader. The chapter on his childhood reading depends, as does much else in the book, not just on the vagaries of memory but on the detailed, if intermittent, journals and diaries he kept over the years. Those sources, from which Schlesinger quotes extensively throughout the book, give the reader more confidence than is normally the case that the memoirist is not simply creating for himself a usable and compatible past.

In 1931, Schlesinger entered Phillips Exeter Academy, where, for the first (and last) time in his life, he found he had to work hard to get good grades. "After Exeter," he says, "Harvard was a breeze." When he graduated from Exeter two years later, his parents decided that at age fifteen he was too young to begin college, and so his entry to Harvard was delayed for a year while he accompanied his family on a year-long tour of the world.

Harvard was indeed a breeze: Schlesinger received his only B in a required course in biology. He flourished in the History and Literature program, where his tutors were the literary critic F. O. Matthiessen and the brilliant historian of American Puritan thought Perry Miller. He wrote his senior honors thesis on the then obscure nineteenth-century intellectual Orestes Brownson. Brownson had a notably erratic career, beginning as a Calvinist minister, then moving successively to Unitarianism, Universalism, and Transcendentalism. At the same time he wrote radical political tracts, including "The Laboring Classes," an 1840 essay that predicted class war and proletarian revolution. (This, Schlesinger notes, came eight years before *The Communist Manifesto.*) Yet just a few years later he shifted radically to the right, joining the Catholic Church in 1844 and encouraging the presidential ambitions of John C. Calhoun. The thesis received a *summa,* and, on his father's urging, Schlesinger expanded it into his first book, *Orestes A. Brownson: A Pilgrim's Progress,* which was published in 1939.

His academic exploits did not prevent Schlesinger from enjoying a rich extracurricular life. He was active in literary circles on campus and made frequent trips to New York to indulge his interests in theater, jazz, and especially movies. He began a lifelong interest in film at Exeter, and during both prep school and college he spent a great deal of time in movie theaters. Between 1931 and 1936, he reports, he saw 482 movies, for each of which he wrote a brief review, followed by a letter grade. In his extensive recording of the literature, music, movies, and plays of these and later years, as well as in his witty, affectionately bemused (and remarkably detailed) recall of the events of daily life, large and small, Schlesinger provides a kind of capsule social history of his class and generation.

Harvard also solidified Schlesinger's politics. He had been one of the few in his class at Exeter to prefer FDR to Hoover in the 1932 presidential election, and at Harvard he ardently supported the New Deal against enemies right and left. Republican conservatives, tied narrowly to business interests, were unenlightened, uninteresting, and unintelligent; and Marxism, while analytically challenging, was "a sideshow, irrelevant to the American future." Even in the depths of the Depression, Schlesinger never doubted "that FDR and the New Dealers could work things out and do so within the system." He has not for a moment wavered in that political allegiance: "I remain to this day a New Dealer, unreconstructed and unrepentant."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In his personal life, Schlesinger was not, he admits with chagrin, unimpressed with his own abilities, and he often displayed the arrogance of youth. He reports an argument over dinner at which his mother finally said to him in frustration, "Why are you shaking your head? Can't I say what I believe?" His reply: "No, mother, not when you don't know what you're talking about."

In his romantic life, he was not so assured. Like many undergraduates he fell in and out of love frequently. In his junior year, when he was nineteen, he fell seriously in love with Marian Cannon, who was five years his senior. Their rocky, up-and-down courtship led three years later to a marriage that, Schlesinger suggests, was not always serene. (His account of all this is subtle and restrained.)

Following graduation in 1938, Schlesinger spent a year at Peterhouse College, Cambridge, on a fellowship. He seems to have studied little, but he socialized widely, and he offers brief, vivid descriptions of the wide range of British academics and political leaders he encountered. Schlesinger as a historian has always had a remarkable ability to sketch and capture personalities within a paragraph or two, and his memoir exploits this talent to the utmost. By the end of the book, after experiencing an immense and absorbing variety of these mini-biographies, the reader gets the sense that Schlesinger has come to know virtually everyone in the Anglo-American political-intellectual establishment. Perhaps his was the last generation in which that was possible. In any case, scores of prominent figures crowd the pages of Schlesinger's memoir, many of them appearing and reappearing in shifting circumstances and unusual coincidences. He is a great fan—odd, given the work's conservative politics—of *A Dance to the Music of Time*, Anthony Powell's masterful twelve-volume novel of life within the English governing class in the interwar period. Powell's complex work captures for Schlesinger what he, out of his own experience (and invoking Powell's title), calls "the circularity of life": "Characters appear and disappear and then reappear in vividly different settings and circumstances, the rhythm of life sooner or later bringing them together again 'as in the performance of one or another sequences of a ritual dance.'"

In fall 1939 Schlesinger returned to Harvard, where he had been elected to a three-year term in the prestigious Society of Fellows. The Junior Fellows could work on any project they wished, except the pursuit of a doctoral degree. The Society had been created in 1933 to escape what William James called "the Ph.D octopus." (The no-Ph.D rule eventually gave way to the pressures of academic credentialism, and Schlesinger is rare among academic historians in his lack of an earned doctorate.)

While beginning research on his presumed forebear George Bancroft—a project that gradually expanded to become *The Age of Jackson*—Schlesinger maintained his intense interest in politics. Like Bancroft, he wanted both to make history and to write it. He loved working in archives and he wrote easily and with grace; at the same time he envied the engaged and energetic New Dealers he met while on research trips to Washington. In the end he opted for the academic life—though with recurring forays into politics—but the history he wrote always reflected the politics he practiced.

Among a few of the Senior Fellows Schlesinger encountered "the first intelligent conservatives" he had ever met. Dealing with their arguments, he reports, forced him to reshape his liberalism to "give it a more realistic and hard-edged cast." That process further developed under the influence of Reinhold Niebuhr, whom Schlesinger first met when his wife dragged him, against his protests, to hear a Niebuhr sermon at Harvard's Memorial Church in the winter of 1940-41. Schlesinger was immediately drawn to Niebuhr's unlikely combination of liberal political activism and conservative Christian theology.

It was not the theology as such that attracted Schlesinger. His parents were mildly religious at best—when they moved to Cambridge they exchanged their lukewarm Congregationalism for Unitarianism. On the evidence of the memoir, Schlesinger's own attitude toward religion ranged between indifference and hostility (he hated the compulsory daily chapel and Sunday worship at Exeter).

But he nonetheless found Niebuhr's skeptical view of human nature intellectually more compelling than the typically American faith in "human innocence and virtue" that prevailed among most progressives. The doctrine of original sin made anthropological, if not theological, sense of human life. Schlesinger had been prepared for Niebuhr by his undergraduate studies with Perry Miller. Miller was himself an atheist, but as a student of the New England Puritans he absorbed from them—and passed on to Schlesinger—"insights into the dark power of the Augustinian strain in Christianity, the anguished awareness of human finitude, failure, guilt, corruptibility, the precariousness of existence and the challenge of moral responsibility."

Niebuhr's neo-orthodox theology would almost certainly have been less attractive to Schlesinger had it issued in the political quietism and sense of resignation normally associated with Augustinian perspectives. But Niebuhr, though resolutely anti-utopian, was neither quietist nor resigned. He was always a man of the left—first a socialist and later a social democrat—and as Professor of Applied Christianity at Union Theological Seminary in New York he remained a major political

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

presence in left-liberal circles from the 1930s into the 1960s. His Christian realism did not excuse sinful humanity from acting against evil in the world. He had broken with liberal Christianity over what he considered its sentimental pacifism in the face of the Fascist threat in Europe. Power must be met by power, and in the sermon that introduced him to Schlesinger he urged America not to turn away from the war that had begun with Hitler's invasion of Poland in September 1939.

The message resonated with Schlesinger. He had himself, in the wake of Hitler's blitzkrieg in the spring of 1940, forsaken his earlier isolationism and become an ardent interventionist. The isolationist/interventionist debate of 1940-41 is not much remembered today, but Schlesinger recalls it as the most bitter and divisive of his lifetime—more so than the quarrels over communism in the postwar forties, McCarthyism in the fifties, or Vietnam in the sixties. None of these, he insists, "so tore apart families and friendships" as that earlier conflict. The debate cut across ideological and class lines. The cynicism of American Communists during the period—insistently anti-interventionist following the Nazi-Soviet pact that immediately preceded Germany's strike into Poland, even more insistently pro-interventionist following Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1940—confirmed Schlesinger's already well developed anti-Communist instincts.

Pearl Harbor, of course, ended the debate over America's role in the world conflict. (Indeed, it virtually put an end to the isolationist impulse itself. After December 7, 1941, America would never again seek to distance itself from international affairs.) Schlesinger's poor eyesight kept him out of the draft, and he sought a job in Washington in support of the war effort. In September 1942 he joined the Writers Division of the Office of War Information (OWI). On the side he performed ghostwriting chores for various New Deal officials, including the drafting of low level proclamations for President Roosevelt. His first assignment—ironic given his anticlerical inclinations—was a statement by FDR in support of Universal Bible Sunday. In it, Schlesinger had FDR call the Bible "a book not for a day or a week but for eternity." ("I was deplorably adept," Schlesinger notes dryly, "at a ghostwriter's duplicity.")

Schlesinger enjoyed his work with OWI, but he soon found himself embroiled in a dispute within the agency pitting its bureaucratic leadership against the young New Dealers who staffed the Writers Division and who worked to insure that the war effort would not obliterate the Administration's reform purposes. After a series of murky internal squabbles, Schlesinger and several of his liberal colleagues resigned in protest in April 1943. The next month he signed up with the Research and Analysis Branch of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), but he found his work there frustrating and inconsequential: "In OSS it was as if one put a message in a bottle and threw it into the sea." He maintained his independent streak, not only over against his superiors but against the numerous Communists and fellow travelers who infiltrated the agency's ranks. His efficiency rating reports, obtained years later, ranked him as "excellent" in every category but "cooperativeness," where he was only deemed "adequate."

By 1944 Schlesinger was desperate to get closer to the fighting in Europe, and he applied for a commission as a naval intelligence officer. The commission never came through (despite his anticommunism, Schlesinger's liberal activism made him suspect on political grounds), but he wangled an assignment to the OSS office in London with the civilian equivalent of the rank of major. (The following spring, after the eyesight requirements for military service had been lowered, he found himself unhappily drafted into the army in Europe as a buck private.) In the meantime, in his intelligence investigations in London, Paris, and elsewhere in Europe, he became persuaded that the U.S. should cast its political lot in the postwar years neither with the increasingly popular Communists nor with the conservatives who had dominated most prewar governments but with the emerging "non-Communist left." He returned to America in October 1945 and was mustered out of the military in December.

Schlesinger came back to the U.S. as a minor celebrity. During the war years he had continued to labor nights and weekends on *The Age of Jackson*, and the work was published to considerable attention and acclaim in September 1944. The book, which won the Pulitzer Prize for History in 1945, was an intellectual tour de force—spirited, ambitious, panoramic, iconoclastic. It ingeniously combined political history with the history of ideas: Schlesinger intended it as "the intellectual history of a political movement."

The Age of Jackson turned Jacksonian historiography on its head. In the tradition of Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis, which associated the rise of American democracy with the nation's continuous expansion westward from colonial days through the end of the nineteenth century, Jacksonian democracy had traditionally been viewed as an essentially western phenomenon. It was seen as an extension of Jefferson's agrarian vision of the nation as a perpetual republican arcadia—a vision in conflict with the eastern Federalist/Whig preference for economic development, urban growth, and government of the few, not the many. Not so, said Schlesinger. He did not deny the influence of the western Jacksonians and their Jeffersonian concern for expanded political democracy. But he argued that the real dynamic of Jackson's presidency lay in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

increasingly urban industrial east, and he emphasized the importance for the Jacksonian movement of the rise of the "laboring classes" and the leadership of eastern writers and intellectuals in the struggle for a more radical economic democracy. Jeffersonian democracy had been essentially a matter of aristocracy vs. democracy; its "more realistic" Jacksonian variant pitted rich vs. poor.

Jacksonian democracy was not so much a sectional struggle as a class struggle. Schlesinger had earlier praised Orestes Brownson for seeing class conflict as "the dynamic force in the evolution of society." In American terms, that conflict took the form of the struggle over control of the state between the business community and all other groups in the nation. To be a liberal in America meant, for Schlesinger, to be above all else an opponent of business power. Jackson, he indicated, had intuitively understood that, and his titanic (and successful) struggle in the 1830s against the Bank of the United States and the business-government alliance it represented became the prototypical event of the nation's political history. In a speech delivered shortly after his book's publication, Schlesinger argued that in sustaining Jackson against the Bank the American people "made unmistakably clear *for all time* their conviction that basic economic decisions were matters of democratic responsibility and could not be left in private and irresponsible hands" (emphasis added).

In speaking of class conflict in these terms, Schlesinger was not vindicating Karl Marx, he was vindicating Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Critics of FDR regularly charged that the class politics of the New Deal represented a radical break with the nation's past. Schlesinger intended to demonstrate, to the contrary, that Roosevelt was acting in the great tradition of American liberalism. He concedes that *The Age of Jackson* "voted for" FDR and against the notion that the New Deal was somehow "un-American": "I wanted to show that, far from importing foreign ideas, FDR was acting in a thoroughly American spirit. . . . Jackson's war against . . . the Second Bank of the United States thus constituted a thoroughly American precedent for the battles FDR waged against the 'economic royalists' of his (and my) day."

Yet the radical Jackson-FDR tradition, Schlesinger argued, was not socialist, much less Marxist. Class conflict was inevitable, but class warfare was not. Schlesinger selected a quotation from George Bancroft as the frontispiece of the book: "The feud between the capitalist and laborer, the house of Have and the house of Want, is as old as social union, and can never be entirely quieted; but he who will act with moderation, prefer fact to theory, and remember that everything in this world is relative and not absolute, will see that the violence of the contest may be stilled." The essential intent of the democratic left, past and present, was to preserve capitalism by taming its excesses. Schlesinger insisted that "the object of liberalism has never been to destroy capitalism, as conservatism invariably claims—only to keep the capitalists from destroying it."

Schlesinger's was a bravura performance, but *The Age of Jackson*, for all its panache, was vulnerable both in its interpretation of the Jacksonian era and in its larger understanding of the American political tradition. Schlesinger himself notes the intense reaction the book provoked, citing the comment of Robert V. Remini, a later biographer of Jackson, that *The Age of Jackson* "swept the historical profession like a tornado, eliciting both prodigious praise and, within a relatively short time, fierce denunciations."

In his portrait of the struggles of the Jacksonian period as precursors of those of the 1930s, Schlesinger was guilty, critics charged, of anachronism. Jacksonian America was, after all, still a largely rural society, not the advanced industrial order that FDR had to deal with a century later. In 1830, 91 percent of Americans lived in communities with populations of less than 2,500 people, and Schlesinger's emphasis on the urban and working-class component of the Jacksonian coalition—not to mention his suggestion of a society divided along class lines—seemed overblown. In any case, other critics noted, the nascent workers' movement and its radical spokesmen often worked independently of the Jacksonian Democrats.

As to the struggle over the Bank and related issues, one school of historians saw the conflict as matching not so much rich vs. poor as rival groups of agrarian and commercial entrepreneurs. Jackson's opposition to the Bank, in their view, stemmed in large part from economic ignorance, in particular a rigid devotion to a reactionary hard-money monetary theory that, had it been consistently followed, would have hampered the nation's economic growth. More than that, and as Schlesinger himself concedes (despite his vigorous objections to the rival-entrepreneurs interpretation), in contrast to the antistatist Jacksonians their Whig Party opponents "had a sounder conception of the role of government and a more constructive policy of economic development."

Later scholars offered more fundamental criticisms of Schlesinger's analysis. Like other Progressive historians, they charged, he had misconceived the fault lines of American politics. From early on, American political divisions had had more to do with complex ethnocultural differences, religion chief among them, than with economic or class issues.

The ethnocultural critique dovetailed with the analysis put forward by the emerging school of Consensus historiography. In opposition to Schlesinger and others

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the Progressive school, Consensus historians emphasized that what was distinctive about the American experience, compared with that of Europe, was the relative lack of fundamental disagreement about the constituting elements of the nation's political economy. Most Americans most of the time had agreed on the essentials of democratic capitalism: political equality, individual rights and responsibility, private property, free enterprise, limited government, equality of opportunity. The political spectrum was more narrow in America than anywhere else in the West. The U.S. had little of the intense anti-Enlightenment spirit that marked elements of the European right, even as it was unique among industrialized nations in its lack of a significant Socialist movement. Americans had, to be sure, quarreled among themselves along socioeconomic lines—and those arguments were not about nothing—but the heat of political rhetoric had obscured just how narrowly circumscribed, in comparative terms, those quarrels had been. Attachments of ethnicity and religion generally counted for more in American politics than attachments of class.

Yet whatever the weaknesses of *The Age of Jackson*—it is, one might fairly say, a great book but an unreliable history—most critics recognized the abundant talent of its author. Several universities made offers to Schlesinger, but he was initially inclined, given his activist impulses, to pass up academia and make his way as a reporter on politics. "My thought," he says, "was to try, at least for a while, the life of a writer. I could always in the end retreat to the cloisters." The retreat came more quickly than he had anticipated. In April 1946, he reports, "Harvard made an offer I could not refuse." Part of the unrefusability of the offer was that the university agreed to put off the beginning of his teaching duties until September 1947, and in the intervening period he pursued his freelance ambitions, writing a wide range of articles—on, among other things, the American Communist Party, U.S. relations with Latin America, the Supreme Court, and the future of American socialism—for a variety of journals.

Schlesinger was a natural optimist, but the immediate postwar political situation appeared decidedly unpromising. The Republicans, as always, were beneath consideration, and the new Truman Administration seemed not appreciably better. "Not only is [Truman] himself a man of mediocre and limited capacity," Schlesinger wrote dismissively in 1946, "but . . . he has managed to surround himself with his intellectual equals." The announcement of the Marshall Plan for European recovery the following year somewhat improved Schlesinger's estimation of the Administration, as did Truman's liberal 1948 State of the Union address, but he shared the widespread assumption that Truman could not win election on his own in the fall and that he might well drag his fellow Democrats in Congress down to defeat with him.

The situation appeared so desperate that Schlesinger joined the short-lived effort in spring 1948 to draft General Dwight Eisenhower to replace Truman at the top of the ticket, even though he concedes, looking back in embarrassment, that "no one knew how Eisenhower stood on the issues or whether he was even a Democrat." It turned out, of course, that Eisenhower was neither a liberal nor a Democrat, and after he withdrew his name from consideration Schlesinger looked forward gloomily to the fall campaign.

The Democrats' prospects looked especially hopeless because they faced opposition not only from the rejuvenated Republicans, who in the off-year election of 1946 had won control of both Houses of Congress for the first time since 1928, but from splinter movements on both the right and the left. The first, the so-called Dixiecrats, began with southern Democrats who had walked out of the party convention in July when northern liberals (enthusiastically cheered on by Schlesinger) inserted a civil rights plank in the party platform. The dissidents organized themselves officially as the States' Rights Party and nominated Strom Thurmond as their presidential candidate. The second threat, which initially seemed all but certain to guarantee the election of Republican candidate Thomas Dewey, came from the new Progressive Party, a coalition of left-liberals, fellow travelers, and Communists. Their candidate was Henry Wallace, a veteran of the left who had served as Vice President during FDR's third term and who had emerged as chief spokesman for those opposed to the Truman Administration's increasingly anti-Soviet foreign policy.

The Wallace campaign marked a critical moment of truth for the postwar American left. Most American liberals, like their counterparts throughout the West, had found it difficult entirely to discard their initial estimate of the Russian Revolution of 1917 as the extension, even the ultimate fulfillment, of the eighteenth-century revolutions in France and America. Glimmers of disillusionment crept in during the twenties and thirties, at least among those open to the evidence, over periodic revelations of the brutalities of the Lenin and Stalin regimes; but majority liberal opinion, while willing to concede certain "excesses," held to the view of the Soviet Union as a progressive force in world-historical development. That attitude hardened with the rise of fascism, and most liberals endorsed the anti-Fascist Popular Front movement of the thirties, with its doctrine of "no enemies to the left."

The World War II alliance with the USSR solidified the benevolent view of Stalinist Russia, a view actively

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

encouraged by the Roosevelt Administration. For the Popular Front left, therefore, Truman's gradually developing skepticism concerning Soviet intentions following FDR's death in April 1945 seemed a betrayal of his predecessor's legacy. In the Popular Front mind, the world was still divided between Fascists and anti-Fascists, and in the emerging Cold War conflict, with the U.S. pitting itself against a progressive-by-definition USSR, the nation was placing itself on the wrong side of history. Wallace, like many around him, was given to vague but ominous reflections on the dangers of American fascism.

Schlesinger, as we have seen, never succumbed to Popular Front illusions. His memoir plays down—excessively in my view—the influence of communism on American political culture in the 1930s and '40s, but at the time he consistently and honorably fought that influence wherever it arose. When the postwar Popular Front forces consolidated at the end of 1946 in forming the Progressive Citizens of America (PCA), he eagerly allied himself with the anti-Communist liberals in the formation just afterward of Americans for Democratic Action (ADA). Despite their agreement on the need for a revitalized and extended New Deal, the difference between the organizations was stark. The PCA, in varying degrees of innocence and cynicism, still thought of the USSR as a natural ally in the ongoing struggle between Fascists and anti-Fascists. For the ADA the defeat of fascism in 1945 had reconfigured world politics, and it was the Soviet Union that was on the wrong side of what, in fact, had always been the more fundamental division—that between totalitarians and anti-totalitarians.

Faced with the incontrovertible evidence of the USSR's expansionist and anti-democratic policies in Eastern Europe, the great majority of liberals came down on the anti-Communist side, and Truman's unexpected victory in 1948 marked, among other things, the elimination on the respectable American left of pro-Soviet sympathies. (Even Wallace came around when, two years later, Communist North Korea invaded South Korea.) Schlesinger rejoiced in Truman's triumph—he had come to a grudging admiration for the President—but the confusions of the campaign and the perceived need, in post-New Deal and postwar conditions, to rethink liberal assumptions led him to the writing, in the winter of 1948-49, of *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom*, an influential work that in the words of one critic "announced the spirit of an age to itself."

In a sense, one could summarize *The Vital Center* as an extension of *The Age of Jackson*'s political argument taking into account the confrontation with communism and the infusion into liberal thought of Niebuhrian perspectives. "Mid-twentieth-century liberalism," Schlesinger wrote, "has . . . been fundamentally reshaped by the hope of the New Deal, by the exposure [of the evil] of the Soviet Union, and by the deepening of our knowledge of man."

The left-liberal Vital Center faced significant challenges on both right and left. The forces of the business community against which democratic leaders struggled disqualified themselves from political leadership by their narrow preoccupation with class interests, their consistent political incompetence, and their lack of vigor and purpose. Schlesinger filled out the sketch of American history suggested in *The Age of Jackson* in which an inept business class, perpetually enfeebled by its lack of a will to govern, created inevitable crises whenever in power from which it had to be rescued by the "radical democracy." By 1949, Schlesinger was so fearful of business rule that he warned that an America returned to business control "might be delivered through the incompetence of the right into the hands of the totalitarian left."

But Schlesinger continued to reject the Socialist alternative. He recognized—though not sufficiently, as his memoir concedes—capitalism's strengths, particularly its economic vitality and its commitment to a free and open society. More strongly still, he recognized socialism's weaknesses: its problems with amassing the necessary information and skill truly to plan and direct an economy and, above all, its dangerous propensity towards the concentration of power in a few hands. Variety of ownership and control was the answer, "as much variety . . . as is consistent with energetic action by the government." The prophet of the new radicalism was not Marx but John Maynard Keynes; the triumph of the New Deal was the triumph of the middle way between unregulated capitalism and orthodox socialism.

The dynamic required to prevent this Vital Center from slipping into a slack and banal centrism was the creative social conflict provided by perpetual group struggle. Where Marxism envisioned that struggle as warfare to the apocalyptic death, Schlesinger's version kept it, through an emphasis on gradualism, pragmatism, and parliamentarianism, as a "perpetual tension" issuing not in actual warfare or final resolution but in an ongoing balancing and rebalancing of social forces that offered society the best guarantee of freedom, stability, and progress.

Schlesinger's insistence that his preferred program of democratic radicalism (he did not hesitate to use the terms "liberal" and "radical" interchangeably) be kept distinct from Marxism stemmed from his generation's experience of Stalinist oppression. The revelations in the late thirties of Soviet labor camps and mass purges bred a new skepticism toward unlimited state power and a renewed commitment to individual liberties. His

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

subtitle, "the politics of freedom," marked the enduring dividing line between democracy and communism.

That line also defined the nature of postwar relations between America and Russia: the conflict between the U.S. and the USSR would be permanent. "A 'permanent' crisis? Well, a generation or two anyway, permanent in one's own lifetime, permanent in the sense that no international miracle, no political sleight of hand will do away overnight with the tensions between ourselves and Russia." Yet for all his support of the Truman Administration's firm anti-Soviet stance, Schlesinger insisted that containment no more meant intimidation than it did appeasement, and he warned that America "must not succumb to demands for an anti-Soviet crusade or a preventive war." He understood as well the subtler dangers of anticommunism. We must not, he said, permit ourselves "to become the slaves of Stalinism, as any man may become the slave of the things he hates." It was essential that a genuine radicalism be sustained in Western Europe and America, that the non-Communist left of the Atlantic community remain as left as it was non-Communist.

Anticommunism must also not come at the price of the sacrifice of civil liberties. "As we anti-Stalinist liberals saw it," he writes in his memoir, "communism was a threat *to* America, not a threat *in* America." Freedom meant freedom for American Communists to spread their pernicious ideas. Schlesinger opposed the firing of Communist professors solely on the basis of Party membership, and he suggested that Communists in government should be removed only for disloyal actions or if they held sensitive positions in the national security apparatus.

All in all, Schlesinger maintained the necessary distinctions that, when the time came, would allow him firmly to oppose McCarthyism without for a moment softening his anticommunism. The line he liked to draw between "rational" and "obsessive" anticommunism was not always as precise as he imagined, but, especially in light of the intense and conflicting passions that attended the issue, he struck a commendable balance.

The Niebuhrian influence on Schlesinger's thought showed itself in *The Vital Center*'s somber summary of the postwar situation. With traditional faiths under question and with modernity's dreams of redemption through science, reason, and technology made a mockery by global war and mass brutality, the result was lives "empty of belief" lived in "quiet desperation." The imperatives of industrialization required of modern man that he "organize beyond his moral and emotional means"; here was to be found "the fundamental cause of our distempers."

Given these realities, the traditional liberal belief in progress was no longer tenable. The optimism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had assumed humanity's essential rationality and virtue, but the twentieth had revealed its capacity for evil. A responsible liberalism would have to discard its progressive sentimentalities and accept people as they are, limited and flawed; and it would have to accept as well the compromises, complicities, and uncertainties of responsible political action.

The threat to America from Soviet expansionism abroad and creeping social malaise at home made it essential that freedom regain its vitality and become once more "a fighting faith." Yet, Schlesinger noted, democracy's commitment to tolerance and diversity, its basis in compromise and consent, made such a faith hard to come by. Its renewal and nourishment depended on the maintenance of certain fruitful social tensions: between individualism and community, freedom and security, private initiative and public power. The tensions had to remain forever unresolved, for democracy was a process and not a conclusion; the struggle was without end and without hope of utopia. "All important problems are insoluble," Schlesinger concluded, "that is why they are important."

The most striking aspect of *The Vital Center* was the distance between its philosophy and its politics, the movement from conservative assumptions to liberal conclusions. Schlesinger himself, looking back twenty years later, noted a combination in the book "of a certain operational optimism with a certain historical and philosophical pessimism." The note of pessimism recurred frequently in Schlesinger's immediate postwar writings. "History is not a redeemer," he insisted; it is rather "a tragedy in which we are all involved, whose keynote is anxiety and frustration, not progress and fulfillment." In denying Whittaker Chambers' claim that anticommunism must be founded on religious belief, Schlesinger argued that the issue was rather "the sense of human limitation, of human fallibility, of . . . the 'moral incompleteness' of man." Doubters as well as believers could be "tentative and experimental in history and humble and contrite before the mystery which lies behind history." When one recalls the classic definition of conservatism as a sense of humility before God and history, it is quite possible to categorize Schlesinger as a philosophical conservative. Yet his politics remained unreservedly liberal as well as basically optimistic. The New Deal, whatever its flaws, had made an admirable record and it remained for Schlesinger a source of hope and of faith in democracy.

The disjunction between philosophy and politics was not necessarily a contradiction, as the career of Reinhold Niebuhr demonstrated. But if the movement from realist assumptions to left-liberal politics was not impossible, neither was it at all axiomatic. The tragic vision

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was hardly a major perspective for most New Dealers, the majority of whom were far closer in spirit to the optimistic pieties of Eleanor Roosevelt than to Niebuhr's tough-mindedness. Niebuhrian theological perspectives could doubtless be made to conform with a number of political perspectives, but at whatever point on the political spectrum they were applied their influence would inescapably tend in a conservative direction.

As it turned out, Niebuhr's influence on liberal thought did not much outlast his presence on the political scene. His was a moment in liberalism, not a transformation of it. Niebuhr is not often referred to today—much, in my opinion, to our detriment—and when he is invoked, it is among neoconservatives, not among liberals.

There were difficulties in Schlesinger's own appropriation of Niebuhr's thought. Niebuhr's pessimism about human nature was countered by an ultimate optimism rooted in faith in God's providential purposes that was not available to Schlesinger and other "atheists for Niebuhr." "One felt the irony," Schlesinger writes, "that unbelievers, appropriating so much of [Niebuhr's] thought, left off when the part that mattered most to him—the ineffable mystery and grace of God—came in." Niebuhrian thought stripped of its eschatological confidence could only chasten the left, not sustain it. Schlesinger's liberalism, for all its musings on Augustinian themes, was in the end, as the title of one of his later books put it, a "politics of hope," and he perhaps underestimated the extent to which his Niebuhrian rejection of belief in human goodness and social progress undermined that hope.

The potential difficulties in the Vital Center were practical as well as philosophical. The delicate balance between antibusiness politics and procapitalist economics was not easily maintained. How did society give business leaders sufficient freedom for economic initiative and yet create a polity in which they were effectively restricted in political power?

Schlesinger's social analysis, for all its emphasis on economic forces, tended regularly and almost inevitably to a separation of politics and economics. As a man of the left persuaded of capitalism's economic virtues, Schlesinger alternated ambivalently between vigorous condemnation of business executives and uneasy acceptance of the business system. To critics to his left, Schlesinger's liberalism seemed an exercise in futility: in a capitalist system capitalist interests will necessarily prevail. To conservatives, that liberalism seemed counterproductive and even perverse: why continually beat up on those most responsible for national prosperity? Schlesinger had noted that a new depression would discredit capitalism and move the country, probably through a series of New Deals, toward socialism. He did not foresee that an extended period of prosperity—such as in fact developed in the 1950s—would make socialism as irrelevant as it had normally been in America and, beyond that, begin to bring into question the New Deal impulse itself.

Both the pressure of events and tendencies from within, then, acted gradually to drain the Vital Center of its vitality. For a few brief years in the late 1940s, a sobered liberalism, sustained by memories of the New Deal, by a foreign threat, and by a newly sophisticated view of man and society, enjoyed one of the more creative moments in its long tradition. But it could not for long preserve that moment.

Schlesinger of course made necessary adjustments in political tactics and strategy in the long years to follow after 1950, but he never abandoned, or even seriously questioned, the ideological commitments of his youth. At the end of his memoir, he offers this tongue-in-cheek conclusion: "It is, I suppose, evidence of lack of imagination or of some other infirmity of character, but I am somewhat embarrassed to confess that I have not radically altered my general outlook in the more than half century since *The Vital Center*'s publication. Perhaps I should apologize for not being able to claim disillusions, revelations, conversions. But in fact I have not been born again, and there it is."

There is much to respect in the liberalism Schlesinger has for so long represented. It has been at once optimistic and unsentimental. What Schlesinger says about his friend Joseph L. Rauh, Jr. could as well be said of Schlesinger himself: "An unrepentant New Dealer, he embodied the old, realistic, exuberant American liberal tradition—liberalism without mawkishness, without self-pity, without guilt, without illusion, but with zest in the struggle and unquenchable hope for all humanity."

But there were costs to Schlesinger's constancy. The New Deal era was, with the possible exception of the 1790s (and of course the Civil War), the most intensely partisan epoch in American history. FDR's conservative opponents hated him and everything he stood for, and he returned the hatred. "Zest in the struggle" hardly does justice to the intensity of the political wars of the 1930s.

Schlesinger is not, on the evidence of his memoir, a man given to hatreds, but his writings, historical and political, have always reflected his deep partisan commitments. His liberalism is not so much a conclusion as an assumption. Particular items of the liberal creed may be open to question and revision, but outside the boundaries of liberalism itself there is finally only folly and illusion. Towards conservatives and conservative ideas, Schlesinger is almost wholly dismissive. It is as if conservatives, American conservatives at least, have

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

no ideas, just unfortunate retrograde instincts. (He is rather more tolerant of European conservatism. Its aristocratic tone he finds more worthy of consideration than the "plutocratic" mentality of its American counterpart.)

Schlesinger's formative experience of the New Deal imbued him with a political philosophy based on the doctrine of liberal legitimacy. America in its authentic expression is necessarily liberal, not just in the broad Lockean sense, but in the specific spirit of the New Deal. Periods of conservative domination are but interludes, in-between times before the liberal legitimists again return to power.

But that makes for a peculiar perspective on the American experience. The era of the New Deal was in fact quite atypical. The economic devastation of the Great Depression and the political polarization that accompanied the Roosevelt Administration's attempts to deal with it were unprecedented in the nation's history, which had mostly been marked by widespread prosperity and by consensus on fundamental political ideas.

The irony of Schlesinger's liberalism is that it held up as normative for the nation's political experience the most aberrant period in its history. In the broad sweep of the American past, the liberalism of the Vital Center and its author stood on the edge of things. FT

Architecture

Blue renderings pencil-in the day.
In angles and geometries the tide comes in, the building does not sway.
The physician and the poet begin an essay
on the heart: electricity, Passion play,
resurrection-jolts and horology's decay
of chimes and ticks: love's broken sway
of faulty pointing hands. Form evokes: spine on X-ray
haloed silver, white, and gray; pathways soothsay
bee to savage sun-tilted flower. Papier-maché
and marble palaces, lit in gold and paper lanterns: in résumé
the body's endgame (star-chaosed birth to doomsday),
writ in blood, dug in clay.

Valerie Wohlfeld

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Rescuing Tolerance

A. J. Conyers

The notion of tolerance encompasses two quite different ideas. On the one hand it can be understood as an Enlightenment concept hostile to theology. On the other hand it is an attitude with deep roots in the Christian tradition. The former wishes to neutralize the deepest forms of religious conviction, while pretending to befriend the idea of religion in general. I will call this the "Enlightenment doctrine" of toleration. The latter is not so much a doctrine as a practice, one that precedes mature doctrine. It engenders an openness toward what is deeply held by religious believers of every kind—not so much the accidental forms of that religion, but its essence: the deep wisdom which (however incomplete) joins itself convincingly to all that is essentially human and essentially wise, and thus permanently true.

In what follows, I tell the story of how the modern doctrine of toleration rose to prominence. I then explore what it would mean for the Christian community to recover the lost, and often discredited, practice of toleration in our post-Enlightenment age.

Many hold that the doctrine of toleration arose largely as a result of the religious wars that ravaged Europe in the early modern period. These wars claimed as much as one-third of Europe's population in certain regions. They also drove Europeans to search for greater stability, to adopt philosophies that offered certainty, and at the same time to embrace the relegation of religion to the private sphere of life.

This account of the origins of toleration contains much that is true, but it also leaves much unmentioned. Early modern Europe was not only a place of tumult and stress. It was also a place of emerging wealth, expanding opportunities in trade and manufacture, and immense consolidation of power in the new nation-states.

The emergence of the modern world was characterized by the growth of regional political authorities that gradually eclipsed the local, familial, ecclesiastic, and sometimes informal authorities that governed (and to some extent still govern) public life. From the beginning, the greatest obstacle to this homogenizing central authority was the authority of religion. And by the sixteenth century religion had so intertwined itself with the emerging political powers that it had lost much of its moral authority in the social make-up of Europe. After the massive loss of life in the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) and the English Civil War (1642-1648)—wars driven largely by religious controversies—it was not difficult to convince Europeans that religious authority was more a force for social unrest than it was one necessary to peace. The Church, the ecumenical bearer of culture, law, and learning, had now been rent from top to bottom. What once provided the framework of an ecumenical accord could no longer perform the function.

Thinkers such as Thomas Hobbes insisted that the goal of social life was to provide peace and security from the life that is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." No one could do that better, said Hobbes, than one to whom we entrust the sword of government; his is the true kingdom of God, since it is the only route to a kingdom of peace. Theologians could only complicate this arrangement, since they sought a kingdom that might work against conditions required by a world of constant conflict—a world that, in its natural state, could only be one of war of "each against all." Religion instead threatens the equilibrium of a well-organized state.

Under the guidance of John Locke, Pierre Bayle, and others, a way of sheltering the secular powers of the state from the disrupting influence of religion was hit upon. It consisted primarily in assigning religion to the

A. J. Conyers *is Professor of Theology at Baylor University's George W. Truett Theological Seminary. His most recent book is* The Long Truce: How Toleration Made the World Safe for Power and Profit *(Spence).*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

realm of private convictions, thus preserving for the state the management of public affairs. This arrangement took upon itself the cast of a new virtue. The appropriate response of the state to the competing demands of religious communities is "toleration." The state could be tolerant because it had ceded religion to the realm of private convictions, and later (especially under the influence of John Stuart Mill) the task of moral philosophy. To state the matter fairly, this privatization of religion was seen not only as a safeguard for the state, but for the religious life as well. But what is not often recognized is that it was quickly being assumed that public life inevitably belonged to the state.

In ceding the private realm to religion, the state was giving up authority over matters it never really governed anyway. Religion, on the other hand, was ceding to the state a domain of social life over which it had always claimed to have some ultimate authority, for it had always claimed insight into the nature of a just society.

It was apparent to many in the early modern period that this was not the only possible arrangement of public and private authorities. The Reformed theologian Johannes Althusius, for one, had seen that society naturally was divided among a number of overlapping and largely informal authorities. These "associations," as he called them—the family, the Church, the collegium (those who work on common public tasks), the region—each impose certain disciplines upon the individual and demand a certain loyalty. These associations likewise mediate between the person and the vastness of the world outside; they make possible a course of action, and they interpose an authority in a way not possible for the individual. Each association has its own proper sphere of action and authority, its own status, and its own vocation or divine calling. The civil government is one of these. But it is only *one* of the authorities among a number of different and sometimes competing voices.

What was happening in the early modern period was the rise of a more comprehensive authority. Less and less did other associations interpose between the state and the individual, leaving the individual (or the family, for that matter) defenseless against what Hobbes had frankly described as the Leviathan. One can see the effects of this in the growth of the state's ability to marshal more and more of a society's resources in waging wars against other governments. Moving from Louis XIV's decision to keep a standing army, not heretofore within a monarch's power, we can fast-forward to the twentieth century where giant states were able to raise and maintain enormous armies, wage wars continually, and mobilize civilian resources on demand. Wars came to require almost unlimited provision from the civilian sector of society.

Why were such wars not waged in the past? Technology is only part of the answer; the more important part is that heretofore the government simply did not have that kind of authority. Now nothing stood between the individual and the state. The individual was, more than anything else, a citizen of the state. Other associations were being eclipsed by the overshadowing association established so remotely and so abstractly between the citizen and the state. With the results of the French Revolution in mind, Benjamin Constant said that "the interests and memories which spring from local customs contain a germ of resistance which is so distasteful to authority that it hastens to uproot it. Authority finds private individuals easier game; its enormous weight can flatten them out effortlessly as if they were so much sand."

The modern doctrine of toleration played a role in all of this. The greatest and most indigestible of all authorities, besides the state, was and in many ways continues to be religion. The authority of religion comes in part from its power to speak authoritatively about those questions that are central to human life: To what end do I exist, act, think, and live with others? To what end does the community of men, women, and children exist? What is truly just? These questions are at the heart of religion. Men and women have been known, moreover, to sacrifice life and property to uphold and to give witness to a particular view of these things. The material world and the temporal life pale in importance when viewed alongside these most important of all human considerations. These transcendent values, drawing as they do upon the deepest and most powerful streams of human devotion, are capable of playing havoc with the orderly pursuit of success in a comfortable and safe life. The sixteenth century—beginning with its religious reform movement, and ending in bloodshed on a vast scale—was evidence of this.

The early modern period faced two grand realities. One was this bloodshed, at the ragged end of a century steeped in religious seriousness. The other was opportunity in the form of increased trade, the exploitation of new colonies in America and new trade routes to the Orient, and the possibility (much of it presented by the emergency of war) of expanding political power.

If the religious quest is the central vocation for humanity—the call to hear what is our place in the universe and the meaning of our existence—then the lure of power and wealth in early modernity served as a highly potent distraction. The doctrine of toleration, it may be said, was the theoretical justification of that distraction. "The commonwealth seems to me to be a society of men," said John Locke, "constituted only for procuring, preserving, and advancing their own civil interests." What are these civil interests? Are they life together for the sake of participating in what is true, just, and beautiful—for which something like a religious vision is needed? According to Locke, "Civil interest I call life,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

liberty, health, and the indolency of body; and the possession of outward things, such as money, lands, houses, furniture, and the like." This he explains in his *Letter Concerning Toleration* in order to strategically place religious interests within the jurisdiction of "the inward persuasion of the mind."

The modern doctrine has therefore obscured what might properly be called the *practice* of toleration. I decline to call it a doctrine because it is not so much a statement of something true as it is the preparation of the soul for that which is true. It has more in common with silence than it does with discourse. It is the habit of not cutting off your interlocutor before listening to what he or she has to say.

At the end of his writing *On the Perfection of the Spiritual Life*, Thomas Aquinas wrote, "If anyone wishes to write against this, I will welcome it. For true and false will in no better way be revealed and uncovered than in resistance to a contradiction, according to the saying: 'Iron is sharpened by iron' (Proverbs 27:17). And between us and them may God judge." Such a sentiment reflects a habit of considerable weight in the history of the Church, and one might say that some of the crowning achievements of Christian thought—for instance, Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*—would never have seen the light of day but for a strong sentiment for a certain openness toward thinkers from other faiths and other philosophies.

It was in overcoming a predisposition in the Church against Aristotle—a pagan thinker, after all—that Aquinas made his contribution. He did so within the thirteenth-century community of thought that was famously populated by Muslim and Jewish, as well as Christian, thinkers. When he takes up the definition of "Truth" he proceeds by calling attention to various important insights into the meaning of truth from a number of sources, not all of them Christian. First he draws from Augustine, who wrote that "Truth is that whereby is made manifest that which is." Then he turns to Hilary, who wrote, "Truth makes being clear and evident." Then Anselm: "Truth is rightness perceptible by the mind alone." Next, without comment on his movement to figures of an alien faith, he quotes Avicenna, a Muslim teacher of the tenth and eleventh century: "The truth of each thing is a property of the being which has been given to it." And finally he appeals to Aristotle, the pagan philosopher, who says that a statement is true "from the fact that a thing is, not from the fact that a thing is true."

St. Thomas does all this in a way that clearly marks it off from modern habits. He does not call attention to the fact that he is drawing from a plurality of sources that represent diverse faiths. Nor is there the lazy air of relativism here. Instead we find the resolute pressing forward to an idea of truth that can be common to everyone because it is *real* for everyone. It is inclusive not in the easy modern way that makes its claim before any effort has been expended to find common ground, but in the more arduous way of the Angelic Doctor whose labors still constitute a wonder of human investigation and literary production. It promotes not a unity that is assumed and goes unquestioned at the beginning, but one that is found at some cost to those who search. As Simone Weil said, "Work is needed to express what is true: also to receive what is true. We can express and receive what is false, or at least what is superficial, without any work."

This drive toward divine truth is not the same as the acquisition of truth. Josef Pieper pointed out what both the advocates and the detractors of Aquinas often forget, that his greatest work is an *unfinished* work. In spirit, and as it happens in form as well, it witnesses to the openness of theology that always points to something deeper. It points to truth rather than holding it captive. This habit of thought has deep roots in the Christian tradition and helps to illuminate what is meant by the practice of toleration. It is an openness toward what is true, recognizing that the truth of God is true for all people, and to the extent that other cultures or religions have been illuminated by truth it is none other than the truth of the one God, the God to whom Jesus himself gives full and incarnate witness.

An example of this early practice is found in Justin Martyr (c. 100-c. 165), who came to the Christian faith by way of Stoicism and Platonism. For him Christian faith is the "touchstone" of truth. He believed that the identification of Christ as *logos* in Scripture opened the way to understanding even pre-Christian philosophies as bearing a measure of truth. Explains historian Henry Chadwick, "Christ is for Justin the principle of unity and the criterion by which we may judge the truth, scattered like divided seeds among the different schools of philosophy in so far as they have dealt with religion and morals."

Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-c. 215) provides another witness. Like Philo on behalf of Judaism more than a century before, he incorporated the best works of Hellenistic literature and philosophy in his own Christian teaching. The writings of Clement that remain to us contain more than seven hundred quotations from more than three hundred pagan sources. At the same time, it was perfectly clear that Scripture was his authority. His arguments would explore the world of Homer or Heraclitus, but then he would resolve the issue beginning with the words "it is written." Thus his thought was not syncretistic, but synthetic. There was, for him, a "chorus of truth" upon which the Christian might draw. This alternative source did not replace Scripture, but it illuminated its pages. All philosophy, if

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it was true philosophy, was of divine origin, even though what we receive through philosophy is broken and often almost unintelligible.

All truth, Clement would argue, is God's truth. In his *Stromata* (*Miscellanies*) he wrote, "They may say that it is mere chance that the Greeks have expressed something of the true philosophy. But that chance is subject to divine providence. . . . Or in the next place it may be said that the Greeks possessed an idea of truth implanted by nature. But we know that the Creator of nature is one only."

While Clement's Alexandrian tradition had enormous influence on the Church, the tendency toward a tolerant habit of thought was not found in Alexandria alone. Gregory of Nazianzus (330-389), whose ministry ranged from Athens to Constantinople, argued for the universality of the knowledge of God, who is "in the world of thought what the sun is in the world of sense; presenting himself to our minds in proportion as we are cleansed; and loved in proportion as He is presented to our mind: and again, conceived in proportion as we love Him . . . pouring Himself out upon what is external to Him."

An advantage that ancient and early medieval thinkers had in imagining the "openness" of Christian theology to alien thinkers is one that tends to elude modern people. The Aristotelian idea of *form* allowed for an understanding that was not confined to individual things. Form corresponded well to the Christian idea of divine *logos* and the Jewish idea of *Dabar* ("word") or of *law*. Such ideas were largely abandoned through developments in late medieval and early modern thought. As Louis Dupré has written, "Nominalist theology had thoroughly eroded the notion of *form*. . . . Christians had used this Greek notion for constructing their own synthesis of nature and grace." This same notion was indispensable to ancient and medieval thinkers. Basil the Great (c. 329-379), another of the Cappadocian Fathers, expressly uses this approach in arguing for the co-equality of the Spirit with the other persons of the Trinity:

> Therefore, inasmuch as the Holy Spirit perfects rational beings, completing their excellence, He is analogous to Form. For he, who no longer "lives after the flesh," but being "led by the Spirit of God," becoming "conformed to the image of the Son of God," is described as spiritual.

In modern times, when nominalist presuppositions undermined the perceived connection between form and matter, the earlier understanding of a higher connection among different ways of thinking and believing was also lost. Thus modern people found themselves incapable of tolerating alien thoughts other than by saying that all opinions are of equal value, since they merely illuminate the mind of the individual doing the thinking. Or, to put it less starkly, modern thinkers confined certain kinds of thought—religious and moral thought specifically—to the realm of the private. By contrast, Augustine could understand that his earlier Neoplatonist books taught him something about God, even though that knowledge was incomplete: "In the same books I also read of the Word, God, that his birth came not from human stock, not from nature's will or man's, but from God. But I did not read in them that the Word was made flesh and came to dwell among us." And he continued to comfort Christians who were conscience-stricken about intellectual "meat offered to idols," writing, "Let every good and true Christian understand that wherever truth may be found, it belongs to his Master." Toleration, which in this premodern sense means listening rather than speaking too quickly so that one might rightly evaluate what is said, was seen by St. Augustine as the normal habit of a Christian mind:

> And what else have many good and faithful men among our brethren done? Do we not see with what a quantity of gold and silver and garments Cyprian, that most persuasive teacher and most blessed martyr, was loaded when he came out of Egypt? How much Lactantius brought with him! And Victorinus, and Optatus, and Hilary, not to speak of living men! How much Greeks out of number have borrowed! And prior to all these, that most faithful servant of God, Moses, had done the same thing; for of him it is written that he was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. . . . For what was done at the time of the exodus was no doubt a type prefiguring what happens now.

It is not true, of course, that first millennium Christianity was tolerant in any thoroughgoing manner. A famous example of a dissenting voice was Tertullian, who objected to all this philosophizing by asking trenchantly "*Quid Athenae Hierlsolymis?*"—What has Athens to do with Jerusalem? This hostility toward other philosophies and beliefs can be found throughout the history of the Church. But it is also the case that a tolerant habit of mind was an important part of the picture prior to the rise of nominalism in the late medieval period and the subsequent loss of the capacity for synthesis. It is important for us to see that the diminishing of such a powerful tool as toleration came not with the "dark ages" as popular myth holds, but with the dawn of modernity. If we are to regain true tolerance, we must begin by recognizing the difference between its authentic practice and the poor substitute that has risen to prominence in the modern age. FT

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The End of Endings

Richard John Neuhaus

"Who except fundamentalists now awaits the actual coming of a Messiah? Who except literalists of a lost communism or anarcho-socialist Arcadia now awaits the actual rebirth of history?" Such are the questions of George Steiner, one of the most infuriatingly and brilliantly eccentric of our literary critics, author of *Errata, Bluebeard's Castle, The Death of Tragedy, Real Presences*, and a host of other books that have been celebrated but, at least as frequently, derided with venom and at excruciating length—thus securing for Steiner the status of enfant terrible, albeit a now aging enfant terrible, in the circles of the erudite where large meanings are cleverly constructed and deconstructed with unseemly relish. We are told that *Grammars of Creation* "originated in" his Gifford Lectures of 1990, which suggests that he has been doing some hard rethinking since then. Along with *The Promised End* by Oxford theologian Paul S. Fiddes (how did the extra "d" intrude itself into such a perfect name for a theologian?), Steiner's book may be viewed as an instance of fin de siècle pessimism at the turn of a century and a millennium marked more by world-weariness than by eschatological excitements. But these books are about more than weariness.

A quick Internet check indicates that there are more than five thousand books in print with "The End of . . ." in the title or subtitle. There is the end of socialism, economics, marriage, sex, childhood, Western Civilization as we have known it, and, very famously, the end of history, not to mention the many biblical dispensationalists announcing, quite simply, The End. As the title of his book suggests, Steiner thinks endings have everything to do with beginnings. His very first sentence is, "We have no more beginnings." Which may be why the spiritual climate at the turn of the millennium is marked by a "core-tiredness"—"the contracts with time which so largely determine our consciousness point to late afternoon. . . . We are, or feel ourselves to be, latecomers. The dishes are being cleared. . . . Valediction is in the air." In this melancholic mode, Steiner knows he runs the risk of what Kierkegaard called "the wounds of negativity," but there's not much to be done about that. The end of beginnings, the end of endings: some things you just can't help thinking about. "Are such questions worth asking seriously, or do they merely invite vacuous high gossip? I am not certain." More than three hundred pages later he is, as we shall see, somewhat more certain that they are worth asking, and worth asking very seriously, which is what he does.

No matter how dark the encircling gloom, Steiner holds on to the intuition embedded in the grammar of man, "the language-animal," that posits contingency against determinism, and life against death. Verb-futures, subjunctives, and optatives are the home of hope. "There is an actual sense in which every human use of the future tense of the verb 'to be' is a negation, however limited, of mortality. Even as every use of an 'if' sentence tells of a refusal of the brute inevitability, of the despotism of the fact. 'Shall,' 'will,' and 'if,' circling in intricate fields of semantic force around a hidden center or nucleus of potentiality, are the passwords of hope." Two Jewish heresies gave form to the grammar

RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS *is Editor-in-Chief of* FIRST THINGS.

GRAMMARS OF CREATION. By GEORGE STEINER. *Yale University Press. 338 pp. $29.95.*

THE PROMISED END: ESCHATOLOGICAL THEOLOGY AND LITERATURE. By PAUL S. FIDDES. *Blackwell. 299 pp. $62.95 cloth, $29.95 paper.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of hope—Christianity and Marxism. The first promised a coming Kingdom. "The future tense of the verb inhabits nearly every saying of Jesus. He is, for his followers, hope made flesh." The second immanentized that eschaton, and produced catastrophe. But at levels both transcendent and immanent, says Steiner, we are now witness to "the eclipse of the messianic."

Steiner writes in resistance to an easy acceptance of that eclipse. Determined resistance recruits to its side all the resources of philosophy, theology, and the arts, which, says Steiner, are more of a piece than is commonly thought. With Wittgenstein, he sees that the sciences and rational analysis can assemble and order facts, but the facts of the world are not and will never be "the end of the matter." Music joins grammar in pointing to the possibility, the reality, of more. He thinks Schopenhauer was on to something when he said music will continue after the world ends. "The capacity of music to operate simultaneously along horizontal and vertical axes, to proceed simultaneously in opposite directions (as in inverse canons), may well constitute the nearest that men and women can come to absolute freedom. Music does 'keep time' for itself and for us." Serious music can even, or so it seems, reverse "time's arrow"—the flight of time from past through present to the future. But time reversed is not time fulfilled or time redeemed.

Like Paul Fiddes in *The Promised End*, like all who have thought long on these matters, Steiner is much taken with Lear holding in the embrace of death his faithful, and fatefully honest, Cordelia:

> And my poor fool is hang'd! No, no, no life!
> Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,
> And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,
> Never, never, never, never, never!

The threefold "no" and the fivefold "never" are thrown in the face of a promised something that will make sense of it all, something like a final judgment.

> Kent: Is this the promis'd end?
> Edgar: Or image of that horror?

Shakespeare promises that his words will "body forth" new worlds, knowing that he writes against the threat of nonbeing. "'Nothing' and its temporal counterpart 'never' thread terribly through *King Lear*," Steiner observes, and he follows the same thread through Mallarmé, Kandinsky, Beckett, and numerous other moderns in whom "language is modulated from articulacy to a naked cry, from that naked cry to silence." Minimalism in the arts asserts, with Heidegger, that "nothing is never nothing," and today's critical theory flirts with a species of negative theology in its chatter about "breaks," "erasures," "cracks," and "disseminations" of deconstruction.

Even the silence cannot remain silent because reality was made for, and made by, speech. This is the great contribution of Judaism, says Steiner, continued today in the work of Levinas: the connection between creation and articulation, the understanding that "speech demands a listener and, if possible, a respondent." To whom did God say, "Let us make man"? Steiner answers, "To His own solitude at the very hour in which that solitude is to be broken by the creation of man-the-listener, of man-the-respondent and gainsayer. In echoing turn, human speech declares its origins in transcendent dialogue. We speak because we were called upon to answer; language is, in the root sense, a 'vocation.'" The Jewish Steiner edges up to, but does not reach, what the Christian Fiddes emphatically underscores, that the dialogue is, in truth, the trialogue of the Holy Trinity, that man is created into a conversation already and eternally underway.

Steiner's prose is frequently heavy going; there are convoluted allusions within allusions aimed, it seems, at flaunting the erudition of an old man who at age twelve, as he somewhere reports, could recite the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* by memory, in Greek. He is among those writers about whom one has to make a decision: whether what is to be learned and enjoyed is worth the price of their pretensions. His literary mannerisms regularly test one's resolve, but over the years I have found myself deciding for Steiner. Consider, for instance, what he does on the familiar terrain of the sufferings of Job. "Job the Edomite does not cry out for justice. Had he been a Jew, he would have done so. Job the Edomite cries out for sense." Many critics dismiss God's answer from "out of the whirlwind" as a cop-out, as an evasion of the challenge of theodicy posed by Job. In his commentary on Job, Karl Barth complains that God displays himself as "a God without God." But the stakes are higher than justifying the sufferings of innocent Job, says Steiner. Job curses the cosmos, with the conclusion that "God is guilty of having created."

The voice from the whirlwind responds to this challenge with a barrage of questions. "Were you there when . . . ?" Barth derides this as a "cosmological-zoological-mythological" farrago. Claudel rages: "What a disappointment! The Architect promenades us from one level to another of His constructions." In "complacent exhibitionism" he displays his successes and monsters, which is no answer at all to the anguished cry of "fundamental human innocence." Not so, Steiner contends. The speeches out of the whirlwind are the most overwhelming apologia we have for the doctrine of "Art

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for Art," of creation for creation. Job's challenge is ontological, going beyond Heidegger in questioning the being of Being; it is epistemological, asking whether the universe makes sense, whether there is meaning to meaning, and all this in a framework that is expressly theological. But God's answer breaks out of these discourses. "Its category is that of the aesthetic."

Steiner agrees with Martin Buber, who says that creation itself is the only possible reply to Job. "The creation of the world is justice, not a recompensing and compensating justice," writes Buber, "but a distributing, a giving justice. . . . The creation itself already means communication between creator and creature." But Rudolf Otto comes closest to the heart of the matter, says Steiner. In *The Idea of the Holy*, he recognizes that Job's suffering is, on the level of theodicy, unanswerable. What overwhelms the man from Edom, Otto writes, "is the downright stupendousness, the well-nigh demonic and wholly incomprehensible character of the eternal creative power." We are meant to be convinced "by the intrinsic value of the incomprehensible—a value inexpressively positive and 'fascinating.'" Steiner's comment deserves to be quoted in full:

> In the aesthetics of God's non-answering answer to Job, "Art for Art" or, more exactly, "Creation for Creation" displays its enormity, its festive impertinence to humanity. The refusal of creation to justify or explain itself, the refusal of the potter to hold himself accountable to the clay, is implicit in the tautology of the Burning Bush: "I am what I am," or "I am/I am." It explodes in Job. God the artist could not contain even within His boundlessness the pressures of creativity. There "is" instead of there being nothing because He is in excess of His solitary being. Wonderfully, the Satan in Job suggests the figure of the critic. He is acidly intimate with the Deity as critics too often are with artists. His role may have been seminal: Satan may have provoked God into creating. "Show me," narks the critic-theoretician. Once creation lies before him, the Satan seeks out its flaws. He ironizes the Maker's self-satisfaction—that "very good."

In the voice from the whirlwind, God employs the poetic in his counterblast to the challenges of the ontological, the ethical, and the religious. The poem exalts if it does not convince or console. Steiner favorably cites a cryptic note of Nietzsche set down in the spring of 1888: "Art affirms. Job affirms." Nowhere does he cite Hans Urs von Balthasar, but those who know Balthasar's theological aesthetics will be struck by similarities. "There is, in the genesis of great art and philosophical insight," writes Steiner, "something 'other' or inhuman. The grammars of creation abide our question." I take him to mean that the grammars of creation survive our question. The iconoclasm of Judaism, Islam, and Calvinism, he writes, fears that "to make images of the Maker of all images is to touch on elemental forces at once too vast and too a-moral for man's understanding." They insist that such making be left to the Maker. Platonism and Neoplatonism—and, he will later add, the Great Tradition of Christian thought and art—are alert to such fears, but "they labor to contain them, to humanize by the light of measured intelligibility the turbulence which sprang out of Chaos." Here, although Steiner does not put it this way, is the great divide between *finitum capax infiniti* and *finitum non capax infiniti*—the finite is, or is not, capable of the infinite. The question is whether our finite ends are participant in the promised ending, whether we can let our endings go without regret, knowing that they momentarily held, and are forever fulfilled in, the End.

Platonism and Neoplatonism, maybe, but Plato, who would ban poetry from his republic, does not really belong on the first side of the divide between *finitum capax* and *finitum non capax*. In *Grammars of Creation*, more than in his 1989 book *Real Presences*, Steiner acknowledges that his argument rests on inescapably Christian foundations. In fact, he has in the past sometimes written in a strongly anti-Christian vein, while the present book reflects the influence of, among others, Miri Rubin, whose *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* is credited in a footnote. Steiner asserts that, after the Platonisms and Gnosticisms of late antiquity, it is the doctrines of incarnation and transubstantiation that mark "the disciplining of Western syntax and conceptualization" in philosophy and art. "Every heading met with in a study of 'creation,' every nuance of analytic and figural discourse," he says, derives from incarnation and transubstantiation, "concepts utterly alien to either Judaic or Hellenic perspectives—though they did, in a sense, arise from the collisions and commerce between both." As Alain Besançon has recently shown in *The Forbidden Image* (see Edward T. Oakes, "Icons and Kitsch," FT, March), these concepts are not so alien to Judaism as Steiner suggests, but his point remains that—in the understandings, sensibilities, and practices of the West—they are carried and enacted by Christianity.

The incarnation of God in the Son, the transubstantiation of bread and wine into his body and blood, are "a *mysterium*, an articulated, subtly innervated attempt to reason the irrational at the very highest levels of intellectual pressure." "Uniquely, perhaps, the hammering out of the teaching of the eucharist compels Western thought to relate the depth of the unconscious and of pre-history with speculative abstractions

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

at the boundaries of logic and of linguistic philosophy." Later, the "perhaps" in that claim seems to have disappeared:

> At every significant point, Western philosophies of art and Western poetics draw their secular idiom from the substratum of Christological debate. Like no other event in our mental history, the postulate of God's kenosis through Jesus and of the never-ending availability of the Savior in the wafer and wine of the eucharist, conditions not only the development of Western art and rhetoric itself, but at a much deeper level, that of our understanding and reception of the truth of art—a truth antithetical to the condemnation of the fictive in Plato.

This truth reaches its unrepeated perfection in Dante, says Steiner. In Dante, "It rounds in glory the investigation of creativity and creation, of divine authorship and human *poesis*, of the concentric spheres of the aesthetic, the philosophical, and the theological. Now truth and fiction are made one, now imagination is prayer, and Plato's exile of the poets refuted." In the fashionable critical theories of our day, we witness "endeavors of the aesthetic to flee from incarnation." "It is the old heresies which revive in the models of absence, of negation or erasure, of the deferral of meaning in late-twentieth-century deconstruction. The counter-semantics of the deconstructionist, his refusal to ascribe a stable significance to the sign, are moves familiar to [an earlier] negative theology." Heidegger's poetics of "pure immanence" are but one more attempt "to liberate our experience of sense and of form from the grip of the theophanic." But, Steiner suggests, attempted flights from the reality of *Corpus Christi* will not carry the day. "Two millennia are only a brief moment."

As Eliot memorably reminded us, in our beginning is our ending. *Grammars of Creation* is about endings and beginnings, and the argument is posited in large part against the idea that, as we press toward endings, we can leave beginnings behind. Of such is the idea of progress in which science has so influentially persuaded us that "discovery" and "invention" can displace "creation." "It is difficult to believe," writes Steiner, "that the story out of Genesis has ended."

> The new cosmologies regard "creation" as being ambiguous, mythological, and even taboo. To ask what preceded the Big Bang and the primal nanoseconds of the compaction and expansion of our universe is, we are instructed, to talk gibberish. Time has no meaning prior to that singularity. Both elementary logic and common sense should tell us that such a ruling is arrogant bluff. The simple fact that we can phrase the question, that we can engage it with normal thought processes, gives it meaning and legitimacy. The postulate of unquestionable ("not to be questioned") nothingness and intemporality now made dogma by astrophysicists is as arbitrary, is in many regards more of a mystique, than are creation narratives in Genesis and elsewhere.

Driven by the ambition to be the dominant discourse, indeed the only discourse, science aspires to "explain everything," and commands silence about what it cannot explain. But the story of the world is entrenched in language, and is indelibly imprinted:

> Language is its own past. The meanings of a word are its history, recorded and unrecorded. They are its usage. Prior usage does not, or only very exceptionally, attach to any color or musical sound a specificity of meaning. Words mean. In the most rigorous sense, meaning is etymology. Each word comes to us, as we learn and use a language, with a more or less measureless freight of precedent. It will, where it pertains to common speech, have been thought, spoken, written millionfold. . . . Even the most prodigal of wordsmiths, a Rabelais, a Shakespeare, a Joyce, adds only infinitesimally to the inherited stock. . . . The means of all meaning, if communication is to be intelligible, are a *prescriptive legacy*. A "new language" generated de novo by some science-fiction edict or word processor would be strictly meaningless (and how can there be language without meaning?). Solely a translation into a tongue accessible to us, only a bilingual lexicon and relational grammar, would give it sense, which is to say a binding historicity.

But a binding historicity is what the modern world, also in its postmodern phase, is determined to escape in its flight from incarnation and transubstantiation. The postmodern temper—a temper, as we shall see, so generously indulged by Paul Fiddes—insists upon unlimited possibility, and the "making up" of possibility on its own terms. Earlier artists, says Steiner, and up through the nineteenth century, understood themselves to be creators rather than inventors. They participated in a continuing creation which they had not initiated. "Even the kabbalistic trope of God's solitude, of His wish to create man so as to have company, has its counterpart in the longing of the artist to 'people this little world' [Shakespeare] with presences at once

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

familiar and resistant to him." So Alexandre Dumas wept at the "deaths" of his characters, and Tolstoy, having fathered Natasha and Anna Karenina, came to doubt his own mortality. The artist as creator was a godlike conceit, Steiner suggests, but it was at least in continuity, however tenuous, with Dante's awareness that he was participant in a story of beginnings and endings not of his own invention. With the twentieth century, all this was to change, and to change dramatically.

Steiner describes the change as a *Sprachkrise*, a crisis of language, a crisis of the word. With Freud's concept of an "oedipal revolt," words no longer meant their meaning. The crisis was in largest part—and for this claim Steiner will likely be attacked—brought on by Jews and a debased and secularized Judaism. From Hofmannsthal and Karl Kraus to Noam Chomsky, from Mauthner, Wittgenstein, and Roman Jakobson to Derrida, "the master-players in the critique of language, in philosophical and formal linguistics, have been Jews or of Jewish origins." "This," says Steiner, employing a phrase from the Marxist past, "is no accident." Jews have been, above all others, "the people of the book." "That 'logo-centrism,' that identification of the spirit with the letter, come close to defining both Jewish consciousness and the fraught miracle of its survival. Where a single letter or accent has been erroneously transcribed, the scroll is to be destroyed." The theme of those who precipitated the *Sprachkrise* was "Death to the textual fathers." From Karl Kraus and Kafka through Derrida's deconstructionism, "modern Judaism has mutinied against its patriarchal-paternalistic legacy of textual prepotence. It is in the nonverbal idioms of mathematics, of physics, of pure logic that twentieth-century Judaism has made its peace with meaning and with truth."

Where the representational power of the word is broken, books can be burned, and where books can be burned, people (the "word animals") can be burned, and they were. The crisis of the word has consequences. Here is the heart of the matter:

> The underwriting of Hebraic-Hellenic literacy, of the normative analogue between divine and mortal acts of creation, was, in the fullest sense, theological. As was the wager (pronounced lost in deconstruction and postmodernism) on ultimate possibilities of accord between sign and sense, between word and meaning, between form and phenomenality. The links are direct between the tautology out of the Burning Bush, that "I am" which accords to language the privilege of phrasing the identity of God, on the one hand, and the presumptions of concordance, of equivalence, of translatability, which, though imperfect, empower our dictionaries, our syntax, our rhetoric, on the other. That "I am" has, as it were, at an overwhelming distance, informed all predication. It has spanned the arc between noun and verb, a leap primary to creation and the exercise of creative consciousness in metaphor. Where that fire in the branches has gone out or has been exposed as an optical illusion, the textuality of the world, the agency of the *Logos* in logic—be it Mosaic, Hericlitean, or Johannine—becomes "a dead letter."

That passage bears rereading. The dispute over the normative analogue between divine and mortal acts of creation is the continuing eruption of the Scholastic conflict between *analogia entis*, the analogy of being (Aquinas), and nominalism's denial of the existence of universals (Ockham), and thus the abiding line of demarcation between *finitum capax infiniti* and *finitum non capax infiniti*. It is of course a complex and perennial philosophical conflict that has in convoluted ways twisted Western thought. As Steiner rightly says, it is finally a conflict of theologies.

In postmodernism's version of nominalism, all true description is displaced by "invention." Literary postmodernism is, of course, an extension of the "modernism" in the arts that arrived with Dada in 1916. Overwhelmed by the slaughter of World War I, Dada heralded the end of reason, the sundering of language and syntax from ascertainable meaning. Hugo Ball sings out:

> *hollaka hollala*
> *blago bung*
> *blago bung*
> *bosso fataka*
> *ü üü ü*

What does that mean? Nothing, or anything. That's the point. "Acknowledged or not," writes Steiner, "the legacy of Dada has been immense." "There has been since no significant movement in Western art, literature, and aesthetic debate that does not come out of Dada. Deconstruction and postmodernism are Dada translated into academic-theoretical jargon—a jargon often as impenetrable as were the glossolalia of Dada itself." The existentialist cult of the absurd, the flower children of the sixties, the "happenings" in fashionable Manhattan galleries, the futurist exhortation to burn all libraries in order to be liberated from the dead weight of the past—all are part of the Dada chorus:

> *echige zunbada*
> *wulubu ssubudu uluw ssubudu . . .*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

George Steiner does not want to be taken for yet another curmudgeonly conservative wanting to return to the past. Who wants to be accused of wanting to return to the past? Time's arrow flies forward, and in his last—and, I think, weaker—pages he offers conventional, and conventionally implausible, hype about the changes likely to be wrought by digital and cybernetic revolution. Maybe God is dead. Maybe the analogy between divine and human creation is forever shattered. He then asks the inescapable question: "Can there, will there, be major philosophy, literature, music, and art of an atheist provenance?" He wants to respect the honest atheist. Such atheism bears witness to somber deprivation. "He doesn't exist, the bastard," said Samuel Beckett.

Suppose a time when genuine atheism replaces the self-indulgent frivolity and faked nihilism, the "blowing neither hot nor cold," of current postmodernisms. "Let us suppose that atheism will come to possess and energize those who are masters of articulate form and builders of thought. Will their works rival the dimensions, the life-transforming strengths of persuasion we have known? What would be the atheist counterpart to a Michelangelo fresco or *King Lear*? It would be impertinent to rule out the possibility. Or to deny the fascination of the prospect." Such questions should not be ruled out of order. But, finally, history is very long and our present moment of discontent very short. Steiner is still placing his bets on the "grammars of creation" with its covenant between sign and signified, word and meaning, all premised upon the analogy between divine and human creation. The book's concluding words: "We have long been, I believe that we still are, guests of creation. We owe to our host the courtesy of questioning."

To move from George Steiner to Paul Fiddes and *The Promised End* is not to change the subject but it is to breathe a very different air. The move is from Steiner's darkly brilliant, sometimes lugubrious and convoluted, ponderings to the clipped, transparent, and seemingly lucid style of Oxbridge debate. It is not that Fiddes has not entertained somber thoughts. The book is dedicated "to my son Benjamin," about whom we are told only this: "1978-1998." And the book's title is drawn from Kent's response to Lear's lament over Cordelia, "Is this the promis'd end?" Fiddes, too, writes out of dark ponderings about beginnings and endings. Yet there is a lightness in his treatment of dark questions. He fully justifies his subtitle, "Eschatology in Theology and Literature," displaying an admirable command of literature—from Beckett to Joyce to Woolf—and of theologians—from Barth to Pannenberg to Tillich to Moltmann. There are gestures backwards, to classical Greek and patristic sources, and throughout Fiddes says he wants to employ "the coinage of the tradition," but the book is chiefly about what the twentieth century, especially its latter half, has made of beginnings and endings, and mainly of endings. Paul Fiddes brings together in a relatively (!) accessible way themes and arguments reflective of much of what contemporary theology is making of these matters.

Of course such a book must take account of the hegemonic fashions of critical theory associated with such as Derrida and Foucault, but to Fiddes' great credit, and unlike many critical theorists, he understands that he is not the master but the servant of the literary texts under discussion, and he provides marvelously close readings and imaginative but respectful insights into the authors' intentions. No student of theology and literature should overlook this book. My criticisms are to be read in light of the acknowledgment of what he has achieved.

Once upon a time, endings fit what went before. But now, along with everything else, or so it seems, endings have been "problematized." What are intellectuals for, if not to complexify the obvious? Hans Frei of Yale taught theologians to understand human life in terms of "realistic narrative." That means dramatically coherent narrative which, according to Aristotle, is narrative in which each decisive event is unpredictable until it happens, but the moment it happens it is seen to be what had to happen. We do not know that Oedipus will blind himself, but once he does so it is obvious that the entire story must end in this event and flow from that ending. Things are not so obvious now, says Fiddes. Against Aristotle and Frei, he notes that contemporary authors, John Updike being a case in point, frequently provide alternative endings for their stories. Which is the "real" ending? The implication is the end of endings; we make up endings without end.

In classical thought, and in earlier "structuralists" of the school of Ferdinand de Saussure, a story or written text is a world of its own. It has its own integrity, its own meaning, its own beginnings and endings. The meaning of words and phrases, as we have seen George Steiner contend, is in their relationship to, and difference from, each other. Northrop Frye said the world of the text gives expression to a universal and deep human desire for a happy outcome, in which we recognize ourselves. Then comes along Derrida announcing the "dispersal" of meanings, and we don't know what world we're in, if any. Differences can now be expanded infinitely, since all signs differ from all others. *Différence*, meaning the spatial distance between things, becomes *différence* in the temporal sense of deferment or postponement. Derrida coins the word *différance* which evokes both senses of difference—*differing* and *deferring*—without simply combining them. As Fiddes

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

writes, "*Différance* hovers between the two and cannot be trapped in any category, but it certainly results in a dispersal of meaning. So if we accept the insights of structuralism itself about the network of language, we can never reach any final point in interpretation of a text. It is endlessly open in meaning, and there can be no archetypal structures such as the comedy of desire that Frye discerns." As Roland Barthes puts it, "The text practices the infinite deferral of the signified."

Fiddes assembles an array of thinkers caught up in the revolution inaugurated by the dispersal of meaning. There is, for instance, Paul Ricoeur, who, like Frye, believes that texts are eschatological because they express possibilities rather than actualities. For Ricoeur, however, the human being is possibility itself, and "fiction changes reality in the sense that it both 'invents' and 'discovers' it." Ricoeur is more conservative, perhaps even closer to Steiner. Fiddes writes, "In a new version of Pascal's 'wager' on the existence of God, Ricoeur breaks through the circle of hermeneutics by saying, 'I wager that I shall have a better understanding of man . . . if I follow the indication of symbolic thought.'" As in the jargon of Derrida, texts are eschatological in the sense that they defer meaning forward; but also in their very meaning, in their sense (structure) and reference (the new world they create), they present a hope by which human beings can live. Ricouer's wager is that, finally, the word can be trusted.

Likewise, Fiddes agrees with Eberhard Jüngel that metaphor creates, referring not only to the world that is but to the world that is coming to be. Metaphor with reference to God is about the God who is coming to be. Being embraces possibility as well as actuality. That is central to Fiddes' argument. But more than that: with Jüngel and a host of others whom he discusses, Fiddes wants to "reverse the long Western intellectual tradition of making actuality prior to possibility." This is the crucial point, and it has everything to do with how we conceive God and the eschatological promise, the End proposed by the Christian story. As we shall see, in this view, the End cannot be the end of endings.

The fourteenth century William of Ockham (?1285-1349) is not mentioned by Fiddes, but there are striking similarities with Ockham's understanding of God as absolute freedom and possibility. The influence of Ockhamist "nominalism" is of course pronounced in Protestant theological traditions, although evident also in Catholic thinkers who are engaging deconstructionist and postmodernist theory, which is essentially (forbidden word!) nominalist, if not quite the nominalism of Ockham. The effect of this influence on Protestantism is convincingly set forth in Louis Bouyer's 1956 study, recently reissued, *The Spirit and Forms of Protestantism.* (One might add, parenthetically, that nominalism vs. the analogy of being has everything to do with current disputes among evangelical Protestants over the "open God" of infinite possibility.) Fiddes recognizes that the "reversal" of the actual and possible drives to the heart of the Protestant project, namely, the doctrine of justification. With Jüngel, he sees justification as a kind of creation ex nihilo. "The whole Aristotelian tradition (from which, we may add, the text 'nothing will come of nothing' comes) assumes the priority of actuality over possibility," Fiddes writes. "But the doctrine of justification makes possibility prior to actuality, as we *become* righteous in God's sight before we *act* righteously." So also, and quite consistently, Fiddes rejects the immortality of the soul, with its suggestion of the continuity of actuality, in favor of resurrection as new creation ex nihilo.

According to Fiddes, "the promised end" must provide both closure and openness to the future. Here he addresses the arguments of, among others, Wolfhart Pannenberg, whom I think he misunderstands (although to explain why would take us too far afield). While he sympathizes with Pannenberg's claim that eternity is not timelessness, he says that Pannenberg's proposal that eternity is "simultaneous with all events in the strict sense" is finally a *stasis* of closure that does not allow for the openness provided by Fiddes' idea of eternity, which he describes as "the healing of time." While Fiddes employs "the coinage of traditional discussion," he finds it necessary to alloy that coinage with contemporary sensibilities. For instance, the concept of "subsistent relations" among the Persons of the Trinity must be rethought in a way so that the eschatological fullness of God's presence is a "non-dominating reality." "Only this," he writes, "will allow us to conceive of an openness at the very heart of closure." God's non-domination is crucial to Fiddes' understanding of The Promised End.

Throughout the typically agnostic or atheistic literature that he so insightfully discusses, Fiddes discovers the fear of authors that the presence of the Christian God threatens their autonomy and creativity. That fear "sets the theologian the task, therefore, of conceiving transcendence without oppression." Theology must accommodate those who, while proposing a deconstruction of "full presence," do not deny presence altogether. They find "a kind of constant flickering of presence and absence together." As Derrida puts it, "Nothing is . . . anywhere ever simply present or absent. There are only, everywhere, differences and traces of traces." Heidegger and others employ the term *khora*, meaning the "space" described in Plato's *Timaeus* which is neither being nor nonbeing but an interval between in which the "forms" were originally held. The concept

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of *khora*, applied to the relations among the Persons of the Trinity, says Fiddes, leaves space within the life of God for human creativity and thus makes the eschatological presence of God nonthreatening.

In his essay "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials," Derrida denies that the *khora* is the same thing as the God of negative theology, chiefly because the *khora* is not "the giver of good gifts." The *khora* gives nothing at all, except that it "gives place," but this is a gift "without the least generosity," and therefore entails neither debt nor exchange. There is no obligation involved, and therefore the integrity of human creativity is not compromised. Traditional Christian theology, Fiddes writes, proposes an explanation of the whole of reality (a "meta-narrative") and is therefore suspected of being a concealed ideology. He cites Nietzsche's dictum that "absolute truths" are a product of human will-to-power. Even a gift, which in its gratuitousness appears to challenge the usual structures of commercial exchange, is absorbed by its reception into the process of exchange and can therefore become part of a "power-game." In this view, even the grace of God as proposed in traditional theology, no matter how unconditional, threatens in that it calls for gratitude in return.

Derrida has said, "I pass as an atheist," but Fiddes agrees with those who say he leaves the question of God open. *Différance* does not settle the question one way or another, but unsettles it for both theist and atheist. The *khora* as a destabilizing and differentiating source provides, says Fiddes, "hints and promises of transcendence that puncture all systems built on complete immanence." The "trace" undermines all pretensions to "full presence" but still allows for "some kind of presence." In the words of Derrida, the "margin of play of difference, of opening" forbids only that anything, including God, "be present in and of itself, referring only to itself." Or, as we may be permitted to put it, God must not get in the way, He must not trespass upon human freedom and creativity. Otherwise, God's creativity and our creativity are in competition with one another. Medievals such as Duns Scotus and William of Ockham posited a dialectic between creature and Creator in which the absolute freedom and power of the latter threatened the former absolutely. In the dialectic of their postmodern descendants such as Paul Fiddes—and there are many contemporary theologians in this camp—a more limited God has been made safe for His creatures. (How such a God, who is not ontologically distinct from, who is not radically other than, His creation could create in the first place is an interesting question for another time.) The theology of God's absolute sovereignty, which Scotus and Ockham held, and Luther took to its magnificent extreme, was a shattering of the foundations. Postmodernist nominalism appears, by comparison, to be a decorous doctrine for the faint of heart. Unlike the God of Luther, the postmodernist God is (or has made Himself) incapable of terrifying.

Although Fiddes cannot bring himself to accept the answers given by a-theologians such as Thomas Altizer who propose "the death of God," he recognizes that they are working on the same set of problems. Altizer's proposal is that human creativity is protected from divine oppression by the "full presence" of God in Jesus Christ who dies and thus, so to speak, definitively removes God from the competition. Altizer differs from other postmodern theologians, observes Fiddes, "in beginning with the notion of total presence as the foundation for the absence which we now experience as characterizing existence." The divine act of creation is, according to Altizer, a negation of eternity; it is the eternal God's self-negation ending in the cross, and in that self-negation is the beginning of human freedom and, therefore, of history. The Creator's love is revealed in His getting out of the way in order to let human creativity get on with it.

Some students of Karl Barth will protest, but it is not surprising that Fiddes tries to recruit Barth to the postmodernist cause that he would accommodate. In humble self-effacement (although not Altizer's self-negation), God, according to Fiddes' reading of Barth, "does not dominate us but gives us our own time and space." Without this *kenosis*, without this self-emptying, Barth declares that "revelation would obviously be an act of violence." From this Fiddes concludes that "Verbal signs in themselves cannot either be bearers of transcendence or be subjected to transcendent presence; there is a crisis of representation here which brings Barth curiously close to Derrida." In other words, *finitum non capax infiniti*. And that in two senses: the finite is not capable of bearing the infinite, and the full presence of the infinite threatens the displacement of the finite.

The concluding chapter of *The Promised End* contains a richly imaginative reflection on the Book of Revelation, as well as Fiddes' proposed resolution of the supposed competition between God and His creation. God, he proposes, does not simply *have* relations within Himself; He *is* relations among the Persons of the Trinity. That is, so far, perfectly orthodox. But he goes on to say that the processions (*perichoresis*) within the Trinity are the space that God opens up for human creativity. The Promised End is not an act of "unilateral sovereignty, but of a humility no less than the *kenosis* shown in the incarnation and the cross." God does not dominate but makes room for human creativity within the dance that *is* God. The comparison is not to the three "dancers" of the Trinity but with "the movements

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and patterns of the dance itself, and these can move in and out of each other and occupy each other's space in a way that dancers cannot." Fiddes quotes approvingly the popular song "Lord of the Dance" which has God declaring, "But I am the dance, and I still go on."

This is a fetching image, worthy of a complex and fascinating engagement between theology, on the one hand, and contemporary literature and critical theory, on the other. Yet one may wonder whether the God proposed by Fiddes is not a God too small. To worship this God is, if not idolatry, to risk idolatry. The "full presence" of the God of the Christian tradition threatens a domination, a hegemony, that leaves no room for human creativity, says Fiddes, following Derrida et al. Thus Fiddes proposes an accommodation between divine and human creativity. That we and our creativity not be destroyed, God must become less. Not as in process theology (Whitehead, Hartshorne, et al.) where God is of necessity dependent upon the world, but by choice God becomes "dependent upon others for enrichment of the divine life." Fiddes recognizes that "this appeal to the freedom of God, which is an appeal to the richness of possibilities in God, takes issue with classical theism." God chooses to be less than God, not just in the event of the incarnation, but in His eternal being, which is not, as the tradition would have it, Absolute Being in which all being participates, but is a being among beings. For Fiddes, God is not *ipsum esse*—the very "to-be" of being—or *actus purus*—pure act—but a participant, along with us, in something greater without end.

Since God is a dependent being (albeit by free choice), it follows that the classical "attributes" of God must be rethought. God is, for instance, omniscient only in that He "knows everything there is to be known." "God cannot know the details of the future because these events have not yet come into being through God's own creativity and the co-creative response of the world; they are just not there *to be known*, and so not knowing them cannot limit divine omniscience." Needless to say, not knowing the future puts a very sharp crimp in what has been meant by omniscience. In agreement with the process theologians and following Whitehead and Hartshorne, Fiddes' God is "the sympathetic companion" of the world, preserving all things and somehow—without dominating or exercising a threatening sovereignty of "full presence"—transfiguring all things, including evil, into ultimate good. For Steiner, the crux of the connection between sign and signified, between human and divine creativity, is incarnation and transubstantiation. In Fiddes' argument, incarnation, never mind transubstantiation, seems to play no necessary part. His triune dancer is, along with those whom he invites to join the dance, already part of the same created order—a created order, or so it would seem, absent a Creator.

There is much to commend in Fiddes' exercise, and I have hardly touched on the suggestiveness of his exegesis of some of the great literary texts of the Western tradition. In his theology, he says throughout that he wants to transcend the "subject/object" dichotomy of the Enlightenment, yet his sympathy for thinkers such as Derrida leads him to join them in objectifying God as the Other who competes with and threatens to stifle human creativity. His proposed solution is to conceive of God as a nonthreatening Other, and the way he does this results in not letting God be God. This is the predictable result of the crucial step that Fiddes takes in order to meet the objections of moderns and postmoderns to the traditional Christian understanding of God, language, history, and eschatological promise. That crucial step is what he calls the reversal of actuality and possibility. The dominant Western tradition of Christian thought begins with God as pure act. In the theology of Fiddes and the postmoderns for whom he speaks, reality is, rather, the play of possibilities in which that pure act, i.e., God, is infinitely deferred. God, in the full presence of His being God, must be infinitely deferred if human creativity is not to come to an end.

The Jewish Steiner is closer to the classic understanding that God is Absolute Being, the I am/I am of the Burning Bush, who encompasses past, present, and future and in whom our creativity is creativity by participation. Fiddes' God of possibility prior to actuality—who, somewhat contradictorily, does not have the possibility of not being dependent upon the world—stands over against the human subject, making our creativity a creativity not one of participation but of competition. The proposed resolution of his "promised end" is that God becomes less than God in the partnership of a dance that has no ending. Since "domination" is excluded, there is no call for repentance or submission on the part of the human subject. This is an ending without the ending described by Paul: "When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be everything to every one" (1 Corinthians 15:28). Or, as the King James puts it, when God will be "all in all."

The promised end of *The Promised End* is that nobody and nothing will be all in all. We will each, God in His way and we in ours, continue the dance without ending. The tradition proposes that Absolute Being can be trusted to encompass, complete, and fulfill every existent, including our lives and our signifyings, in The Promised End. Fiddes' alloyed "coinage" of the tradition proposes an eschatology without an *eschatos*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

His is a God who in deference (a word interestingly related to Derrida's *différence* and *différance*) to the human subject does not infringe upon our freedom. Our freedom is not in knowing the truth (John 8) nor in knowing even as we are known (1 Corinthians 13) but in the endless postponement of actuality as we join God and are joined by God in postmodernism's dance of signifiers that forever practice "the infinite deferral of the signified."

For all the charms of Fiddes' argument, and they are considerable, George Steiner has, I believe, a more profound understanding of the grammars of creation, in which our creativity participates in an analogy of being; in which our signifying is in response to the Signified and Signifier who is the actuality of the "I am" who forever includes every possibility of what will be. We are, as Steiner says, the guests of creation. Better, we are the guests of the Creator. We owe it to our host to let Him, to pray Him, to finish the story according to *His* promised end. The alternative is, with no promised end,

hollaka hollala
blago bung
blago bung
bosso fataka
ü üü ü FT

All I Fear

All I fear,
Lord, on this planet teeming, wild,
Are the death of my child
And faithlessness to You.
The one would pull the other in its wake
As surely as earth's spin each day our light must take
Or so I fear.

Would it?
I beg you, don't bring me to a test of love
I can't pass. If boundless grief should move
The father who survives his child to hate You,
My bond with him is stark and raw.
When tender flesh of his flesh slips too early into universal maw,
How does raging Lear bear it?

In losing her I lose You.
Let me not lose her.
When I die let her remember
Her father's antique faith in You.
Let her somber heart review the desolate fragility of life.
Let her mock the adiaphora of strife,
And shed warm tears of thanks to You.

Hal Riedl

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Books In Review

Celebrating Hellenism

Greek Ways: How the Greeks Created Western Civilization. By Bruce Thornton. *Encounter. 242 pp. $24.95.*

***Reviewed by* Edward T. Oakes**

When Karl Barth was at the height of his fame and productivity in the years between 1930 and 1960 and making neo-orthodoxy the dominant force in Protestant thought, another trend in theology was competing for the attention of the public. Sometimes known as the history-of-salvation school and sometimes as the biblical theology movement, this school of thought—like Barth's theology—roundly dismissed natural theology and philosophical proofs for the existence of God. Instead, it too elevated revelation as the sole norm and all-judging criterion for Christian theology.

But unlike Barth's own attack on natural theology, this school tended to cluster the two foci of theology, reason and revelation, into specific historical cultures. Almost echoing Tertullian's famous sneer, "What does Athens have to do with Jerusalem?", the biblical theology movement tended to belittle Greek civilization while praising Hebrew religion to the skies. But it went further: it also usually claimed to describe something called a *Hebrew mindset* that was, so it claimed, inherently more suited to receiving revelation than was the Hellenic outlook. And often enough this mindset was to be found lurking in the esoteric features of Hebrew grammar and syntax, a language supposedly far superior to Greek for receiving God's word.

Given Barth's own towering influence in these years, many knowledgeable observers saw similarities between his theology and this, so to speak, "neo-Tertullianism." Not surprisingly, many advocates in the biblical theology camp were quick to point out these apparent "elective affinities," even to the extent of claiming Barth in support of their views. Barth himself, however, would have none of it. In an insufficiently noticed passage in the *Church Dogmatics* (III/2, 283-285), he had this to say of these advocates:

> A certain agitation among theologians in the past few decades against Greek culture has not been a good thing. With their emphasis on eros, the Greeks understood that man is a free, openhearted, willing, spontaneous, cheerful, bright, and social being. . . . No other nation of antiquity, not even the chosen people of Israel, was granted the privilege of displaying so fully what humanity as an unbroken continuum means. . . . The agape of the Christian would not be what it claims to be if it remains hidden to the transparency of Greek eros. When someone schooled in Hellenic culture encounters the Christian, he should feel a sense of solidarity to the very roots of his erotic being.

Even though Bruce Thornton does not cite Karl Barth anywhere in his book *Greek Ways*, and indeed only glancingly refers to Christianity at all, his remarkable essay on our debt to the Greeks may be taken as an extended commentary on Barth's appreciation for the culture of Hellas. For the author has set out to counter a recent trend in the secular academy that bears uncanny parallels to the biblical theology movement of the postwar period. This time, of course, the professional Greek-bashers are not attacking Hellenic civilization in the name of the Hebrew Bible. Quite the contrary, their motivation seems to be a kind of Rousseauian primitivism: no civilization can dare be regarded as superior to any other on the globe, no matter how remarkable its achievements or beneficial its legacy.

For Thornton, this attitude resembles Hegel's famous night in which all the cows look black, for it refuses to engage each civilization on its own terms by taking account of its unique features. But worse yet, not only does it distort the historical record, this criticism of Greek civilization also hides within itself a bad-faith resentment against the contemporary West, very much including its reverence for the critical intellect:

> Ultimately, however, the greatest testimony to the "Greek spirit" so oft derided by the postmodernist or multiculturalist critic is the critic himself, whose life and mind are what they are because of the Greeks. . . . He is free to speak his mind and to criticize the very culture that makes him what he is. And that is the greatest irony: for the spirit of criticism that among so many academics has fossilized into a pose has its origins nowhere but among the Greeks, who were the first to question critically everything from the gods to political power to their very selves, the first to live what Socrates called "the examined life." . . . As Victor Hanson and John Heath write, "Not one of the multicultural classicists really wishes to live under indigenous pre-Colombian ideas of government, Arabic protocols for female behavior, Chinese

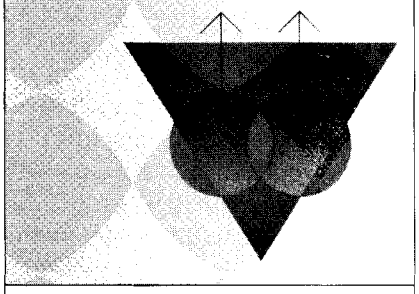
Edward T. Oakes, S.J., *has just translated Josef Pieper's* The Concept of Sin *for St. Augustine's Press.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Homosexuality

The Use of Scientific Research in the Church's Moral Debate

Stanton L. Jones & Mark A. Yarhouse



IS HOMOSEXUALITY A PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDER? Can it be changed? In *Homosexuality: The Use of Scientific Research in the Church's Moral Debate* Stanton L. Jones and Mark A. Yarhouse face these questions squarely. Surveying the best research to date, they sort out what science really shows and what it means to the moral debate in the church. This thoroughly researched, biblically attuned book is suitable as a pastoral resource, as well as for informing church leaders and for adult education.
0-8308-1567-8, $12.99

"This new book . . . will benefit greatly all sides [of] the contemporary debate."
DON BROWNING, *Divinity School, University of Chicago*

"This . . . study . . . will become a central work in the Christian debate."
TIMOTHY BRADSHAW, *Senior Tutor, Regent's Park College, Oxford*

InterVarsity Press
P.O. Box 1400,
Downers Grove, Illinois 60515-1426
(630) 734-4321 www.ivpress.com
Available at bookstores

canons of medical ethics, Islamic traditions of church and state, African approaches to science, Japanese ideas of race, Indian social castes, or Native American notions of private property."

Such a passage might make it seem that the author is enveloping himself in a hazy interpretative glow, a kind of miasma that can see only the bright, cheerful, and humane side of Greek culture—the very mode of hyper-appreciation that has led to the decline in reputation that now afflicts such amateur admirers of Hellenism as Edith Hamilton. As early as 1950 E. R. Dodds had exploded the earlier received wisdom that saw only the serenity of classical lines and humane rationality in Hellenic culture. After his seminal book *The Greeks and the Irrational* appeared, with its depictions of blood rituals, chthonic deities of revenge, haruspicy, and so forth, who would presume to return to the naiveté of Hamilton, especially by claiming a Greek superiority in the arts of *civilization*?

ADMITTEDLY, AT TIMES, Thornton does seem to paint with rather too broad a brush, as when he claims that the Greeks alone recognized the horrors of war while the Assyrians and Egyptians glorified bloodlust and patriotic gore (the braggings of tyrants inscribed on stone monuments hardly can be said to capture the attitude of the folk). But for the most part, the author admits the evils embedded in Greek civilization, among which one can easily name the constricted life of most women, the demagoguery of so many politicians, and worst of all the degradation of the slave's life (he quotes the medical writer Galen who once saw an owner poke his slave's eye out with a reed pen).

And here Thornton's eye for distinctions surpasses that of the post-modern Greek-bashers. For example, at one point he quotes the distinguished historian of ancient science G. E. R. Lloyd, who said of Greek science: "Much as the Egyptians and Babylonians contributed to the *content* of these studies, the investigations only acquire self-conscious *methodologies* for the first time with the Greeks." For Thornton, this heuristic innovation in fact holds true of Greek culture across the board:

> Critical consciousness and its public expression were what most differentiated the Greeks from their neighbors, even when their own actual behavior was typical of other ancient peoples. All humans are sexual, but only the Greeks thought through so completely the meaning and implications of our sexuality. All societies in the ancient world kept slaves, but only a Greek said, "Nature created no one a slave." . . . All ancients subjected women to subordinate roles and limited their lives, but only the Greeks put on the public stage intelligent, courageous, magnificent women who more often than not morally dwarfed the petty men around them, and who made trenchant commentaries on their unfair treatment, thus making possible a critical review of masculine assumptions and prejudices. Most ancient peoples made war against their neighbors, but only the Greeks publicly sympathized with the suffering of their enemies, as Aeschylus did in the *Persians*, before an audience including many who had fought the Persians or had lost loved ones to them.

Thornton cites an abundance of literature to show how deeply the Greeks felt about the sufferings—

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the sheer *pointless* sufferings—brought in the wake of war. But unlike the often sentimentalized views of modern pacifists, the Greeks never lost sight of the other side of war: its frequent necessity. Indeed they could face the harsh realities of war so realistically precisely because war for them was such a constant of their reality:

> We should not expect to find antiwar sentiment in Greek thought. Pacifism is the transitory luxury of a people whose security has been earned by the bravery and militarism of earlier generations. . . . In the actual Iron Age world, war was considered a nonnegotiable constant of human life, a necessity deriving from the innate violence and greed of humans or from the scarcity of resources in a harsh natural world. Thus Plato said, "Every city is in a natural state of war with every other."

One cannot finish this well-written and pleasantly accessible defense of Hellenic civilization without wondering if the fierce resentment against Attic superiority (and Thornton quotes a great deal of such resentful scholarship in the early chapters) does not conceal a closet nihilism—a hostility to the light of Being first honored and brought to expression by the Greek philosophers. Do we really hate ourselves and the human condition that much? At all events, Thornton has not just performed a needed service to the world of higher education. He has also proved once more the truth of what Europe's greatest historian of the Renaissance, Jacob Burckhardt, said at the onset of modern nihilism in the late nineteenth century: "It is for this reason that posterity needs to study the Greeks: if we ignore them we are simply accepting our own decline."

The Burdens of History

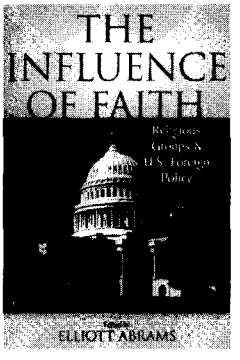
Why Angels Fall: A Journey Through Orthodox Europe from Byzantium to Kosovo. By Victoria Clark. *St. Martin's. 432 pp. $29.95.*

***Reviewed by* Walter D. Connor**

Why Angels Fall, a mixture of travelogue and theological/religious commentary on the history and culture of Orthodox Europe by a secular citizen of the European Union, is an extremely readable and informative work. Victoria Clark leads her reader through Macedonia, Greece, Romania, Russia, Cyprus, the troubled lands that Serbs inhabit or covet (Kosovo, Bosnia, Montenegro), and finally Istanbul itself. The book is informed by history—as any thorough study of the region would have to be—but the main thrust of Clark's work is contemporary. *Why Angels Fall* is about Kosovo. It is about the Yugoslav breakup. It is about the Serbs and their profound sense of victimhood. And it is about Romania's squalor, Russia's post-Soviet disorder and corruption, and the bad "fit" between Orthodox Greece, NATO, and the EU.

In Clark's view, it was the end of the Cold War—the collapse of Soviet domination and the response of Western Europe to this development—that exposed a divide in the political-military "East." "Traditionally Roman Catholic or Protestant Poland, East Germany, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia greeted their reopening to . . . Western Europe with joy, and Western Europe soon made plans to include them in NATO and the European Union. But the Eastern Orthodox countries . . . Serbia and Montenegro . . . Macedonia, Romania, Bulgaria, Moldavia, Ukraine, Belarus, Russia . . . were shut out, disqualified on the grounds of being insufficiently democratic and economically nonviable." And as for religion, Clark recognizes that the part it plays in shaping East-West relations is largely shaped by history and institutional heritages. Both NATO's and the EU's "eastern borders are set to

Walter D. Connor *is Professor of Political Science, Sociology, and International Relations at Boston University.*



THE INFLUENCE OF FAITH
Religious Groups and U.S. Foreign Policy
Edited by Elliott Abrams

Religion plays an increasing role on the international scene, and *The Influence of Faith* examines diverse aspects of this role. It offers both broad historical analysis and concrete current examples on such topics as religion in the history of U.S. foreign policy, religious persecution today, China's Christian connections, political Islam and violence, and the policy influence of missionary and relief organizations. Among the eighteen contributors are **J. Bryan Hehir, Samuel P. Huntington, Andrew S. Natsios, Allen D. Hertzke,** and **Habib C. Malik.**

247 pages, paper $24.95 ISBN 0-7425-0763-7

"The most impressive collection on religion and politics I have encountered, sophisticated in several different dimensions."
— **Michael Novak**, American Enterprise Institute

ETHICS AND PUBLIC POLICY CENTER • ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD
www.eppc.org *orders:* 800-462-6420

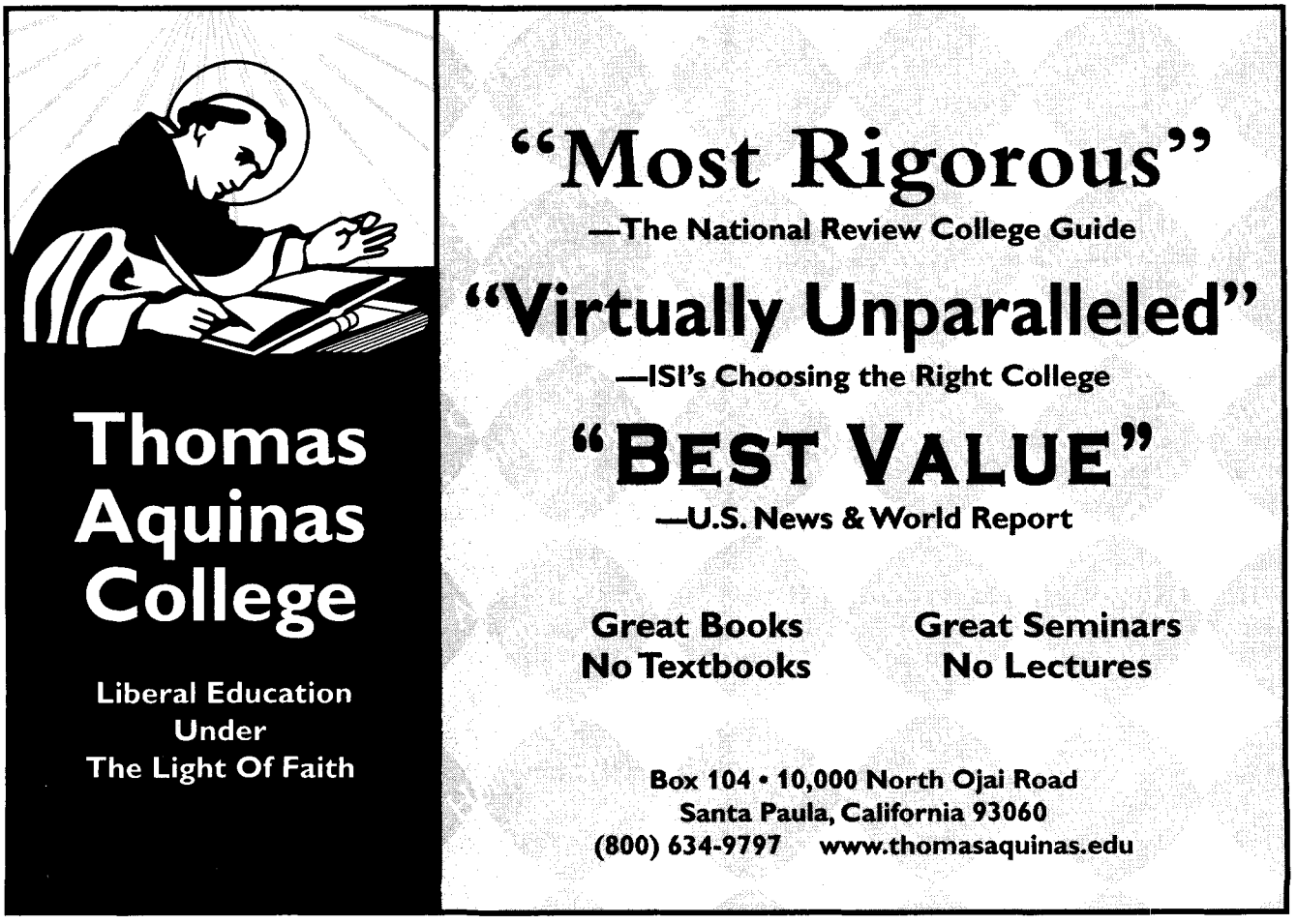
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

follow almost exactly Europe's oldest political fault-line, which dates back to the second century A.D. and the division of the Roman Empire into two halves—the Western ruled from Rome, the Eastern from Constantinople." The 1054 schism only solidified the religious divide.

The distinction between the two Europes is thus not artificial, not a matter of "construction" in academic jargon. It is palpable to those who spend any substantial time traversing the boundary between East and West. Although this division does not figure prominently in the minds of many Westerners, it is quite real to those attuned to religious differences and the cultural conflicts that can flow from them.

The fact is, Orthodoxy is different from the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches of the West, and not just because of old divisions between mysticism and rationalism, ritualism and moral theology, Latin and Old Church Slavonic. Beginning well before the fall of Byzantium, the Eastern branch of Christianity was exposed to an expansionist Muslim power in the form of the Ottoman Empire. Virtually all of Europe's Orthodox Christians, save for those of the Russian imperial lands, became part of the "*Rum* millet," the subject Christian community of "Turkey in Europe." These were not circumstances that encouraged theological speculation, the cultivation of debate and polemic. Nor did the Turks encourage mass conversion. In Russia, Peter the Great abolished the Moscow Patriarchate, replacing it with a Holy Synod of his cronies: the state church was hardly encouraged in the development of intellectual, or even pastoral, activity. Add to these political considerations the fact that Orthodoxy ministered to what became, certainly after 1453, Europe's poorer, less developed regions, and it becomes apparent that the situation in the Orthodox world is and long has been a uniquely troubled one.

Much of what has happened to Orthodoxy over the centuries since 1453, Clark argues, involves two different responses to the demise of the Byzantine Empire. The first has amounted to a merger of religion and a politicized ethno-nationalism, exclusivist, aggressive, and violent in a way that the Empire never was. This form of religious nationalism—called "Phyletism"—would largely drive the Greeks to revolt against the Turks in 1820, and it contributes to the tumultuous nature of the Orthodox world to the present day.


Thomas Aquinas College
Liberal Education Under The Light Of Faith
"Most Rigorous"
—The National Review College Guide
"Virtually Unparalleled"
—ISI's Choosing the Right College
"BEST VALUE"
—U.S. News & World Report
Great Books No Textbooks
Great Seminars No Lectures
Box 104 • 10,000 North Ojai Road
Santa Paula, California 93060
(800) 634-9797 www.thomasaquinas.edu

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The second response was a flight into religious mysticism, a turning inward to the purity of contemplative life called "Hesychasm." Fleeing the worldly, seeking the inner transfiguring light, whether in the monastic context or outside of it, Hesychasm is probably best epitomized by the "Jesus prayer" ("Lord Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me") and the constant repetition that is the approved mode of its intonation. While Phyletism and Hesychasm each play an important role in the Orthodox soul, one is tempted to observe that, historically speaking, the supply of the former and its obvious and unpleasant consequences has exceeded that of the latter.

Clark provides a thick and rich series of vignettes, encounters with clergy high and low, laity with and without religious and intellectual pretensions. They are exotic; they are arresting; they are troubling. In Greece, for example, citizens have begun to fear that an EU-standardized identity card attaches the numbers "666" to each person's name, raising concerns that "electronic cards or implanted microchips" are instruments of the Antichrist's advance. A Russian priest—a well-known democratic dissident in the Brezhnev period—has similar fears and sees a new world order driven by the "West + America + Jews."

Kosovo, it seems, has done more than anything to twist religious loyalty, ethnic affiliation, and historical "entitlement" into a package impossible to unbundle. If in the West NATO's move into Kosovo was seen as a strike against Slobodan Milosevic, an "evil warmongering tyrant," in the East any notion of humanitarian motive to protect Kosovar Albanians was rejected out of hand. Instead, it was widely believed that the war was a front for the American ambition to "rule the entire world." A Greek bishop, for instance, sees in Kosovo "a war against Orthodoxy," with NATO "wearing the colors of every force that had ever come out of the West to threaten the East," from the Crusaders to the Nazis. For his part, Serbian Father Milorad, hanging on in Kosovo's capital Pristina, fortyish and a satellite TV viewer, has his own views on Western hypocrisy and perfidy. Princess Di, he says, was "killed on the orders of your Queen," and the chasing pappa-razzi were actually commandos, doling out her punishment "for f—king a Muslim." He goes on to assert that in the fourteenth century, "when London was nothing, our kings were dining off silver plates with golden cutlery."

Clark's book, then, is about a lot more than religion; its subject is, in a sense, "everything"—everything about Orthodox Europe that makes it distinct from the West. If she veers off from time to time into murky areas and indulges in some questionable generalizations, the book does not suffer much because of it.

For even if communism did not, as one Serb tells her, become deeply rooted in the East because it was a "religion" with particular affinities with Orthodoxy, the fact remains that Orthodox "Europe" is quite a different place than the one often referred to in textbooks on Western Civilization. Heritage and circumstance have driven much of Orthodoxy toward "Phyletism," just as its faith has at times tended to "identify itself utterly" with *ethnos*. Whether this part of Europe and its peoples cope successfully with the unique burdens of their history is a major issue for the dawning century—and one to which Clark has provided a compelling and useful introduction.

Samford University's Beeson Divinity School
presents
PILGRIMS ON THE SAWDUST TRAIL:
EVANGELICAL CONVERSATIONS
October 2 - 3, 2001
Beeson Divinity Chapel

A two-day conference that will bring together representatives of four pivotal intersections, sectors of historic tension and controversy where conversation is helping to define evangelical identity and enrich mutual understanding.

SPEAKERS INCLUDE

JOEL A. CARPENTER, Provost, Calvin College
RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS, President, Religion and Public Life
RICHARD MOUW, President, Fuller Theological Seminary
TOM ODEN, Professor, Drew University Theological School
GABRIEL FACKRE, Professor, Andover Newton Theological School
TIMOTHY GEORGE, Dean, Beeson Divinity School
CHERYL BRIDGES JOHNS, Associate Professor, Church of God School of Theology
GEORGE D. MCKINNEY, Bishop, St. Stephen's Church of God in Christ Ministries
DIANE KNIPPERS, The Institute on Religion and Democracy
KEVIN BAUDER, Professor, Central Baptist Theological Seminary
JOHN ARMSTRONG, Reformation and Revival Ministries
PATRICIA A. OUTLAW, Associate Professor of Divinity, Beeson Divinity School

The cost of the conference is $125 per person.
For more information or to receive a brochure, call 1-800-888-8266 or 1-205-726-2991, or visit our Web site at http://beeson.samford.edu

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Active and Passive

THE DIVIDED SELF OF WILLIAM JAMES. By RICHARD M. GALE. *Cambridge University Press. 364 pp. $64.95.*

***Reviewed by* Michael L. Raposa**

IN HIS 1895 meditation on the question "Is Life Worth Living?" William James concluded that human life is either a "real fight in which something is eternally gained for the universe by success" or it is a trivial game from which "one may withdraw at will." As evidence for the first possibility, he observed that "it *feels* like a real fight—as if there were something really wild in the universe which we . . . are needed to redeem." The very first task, then, is "to redeem our own hearts" by overcoming both our fears and our lack of conviction.

This sort of martial perspective was a persistent feature of James' writing, most clearly visible in his 1910 essay on "The Moral Equivalent of War," but present even in his major works on *The Principles of Psychology* and *The Varieties of Religious Experience.* James never fought in the great Civil War that traumatized both the nation and his family. (His two younger brothers saw considerable action, and one of them, Garth Wilkinson "Wilky" James, was seriously wounded in combat.) Yet in the aftermath of that conflict, he became preoccupied with the *idea* of war. Moreover, at this time James was also engaged in a fierce battle with his own psychological demons, suffering from a deep depression and even contemplating suicide (the "withdrawal from the game" to which he later alluded). The turning point in this conflict came in 1870 with his realization that the key to life's meaning consisted in the vigorous exercise of human freedom, of volition.

It was an exercise that had to be consistently repeated, he claimed, since every victory is temporary and no achievement of meaning is permanently secure. It was in this fashion that James, perhaps the most famous and distinctively American of American philosophers, gradually came to conceive of life itself as a "real fight," with real threats and risks, an ongoing test of each person's courage and strength of will.

Richard M. Gale's superb *The Divided Self of William James* focuses the reader's attention on this interior battleground, portraying various philosophical arguments and perspectives as deeply rooted in and shaped by James' psychological conflicts. His primary conflict, as Gale sees it, was between his "Promethean" and his "mystical" selves. The former self was most perfectly embodied in James' pragmatism, his vision of a world colored by human interests, distinctively shaped by human choices and conduct. James' mystical perspective was most clearly articulated in his later writings; they describe reality as a continuum of consciousness (his "panpsychism") and reveal his longing to achieve intimacy with other selves, as well as union with a higher Self. Nevertheless, the tense struggle between his Promethean and his mystical impulses was life-long, with the latter discernible throughout his career and perhaps representing a condition he inherited from his father (Henry James, Sr., who was himself a religious philosopher and a Swedenborgian mystic of sorts).

James' internal struggle, as Gale documents it, was complex and multifaceted. In the realm of metaphysics, the Promethean is inclined to create and inhabit multiple worlds, with each world linked to a particular set of defining interests and purposes. The mystic, on the other hand, is an absolutist, whose claims are intended to be about *the* world as it really is, about the ultimate nature of things. Ethically speaking, the Promethean is vigorously active, a heroic self, whose actions result as much in the creation as in the discovery of meaning. (James' martial images are best adapted for the purpose of describing this Promethean type.) By contrast, the mystical personality tends to passivity, abandoning itself to a higher power or powers, secure in the con-

MICHAEL L. RAPOSA *is Professor of Religious Studies at Lehigh University and the author of* Peirce's Philosophy of Religion *and* Boredom and the Religious Imagination.

CIVITAS
A PROGRAM IN FAITH AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Fellowship applications are being accepted for the Pew Civitas Program in Faith and Public Affairs

Civitas is a program of civic education and leadership development for Christian doctoral students. *Civitas* scholars participate in a fully-funded, five-week summer institute on Faith, Politics and Public Policy and may apply for a four-month fellowship as a *Civitas* Fellow with the American Enterprise Institute or The Brookings Institution. For application material and more information contact: Keith Pavlischek, Director, Civitas, Center for Public Justice, P.O. Box 48368, Washington DC 20002, civitas@cpjustice.org, 1-877-550-5750, www.cpjustice.org

Application Deadline: December 1, 2001

Participating Organizations
American Enterprise Institute
The Brookings Institution
Center for Public Justice

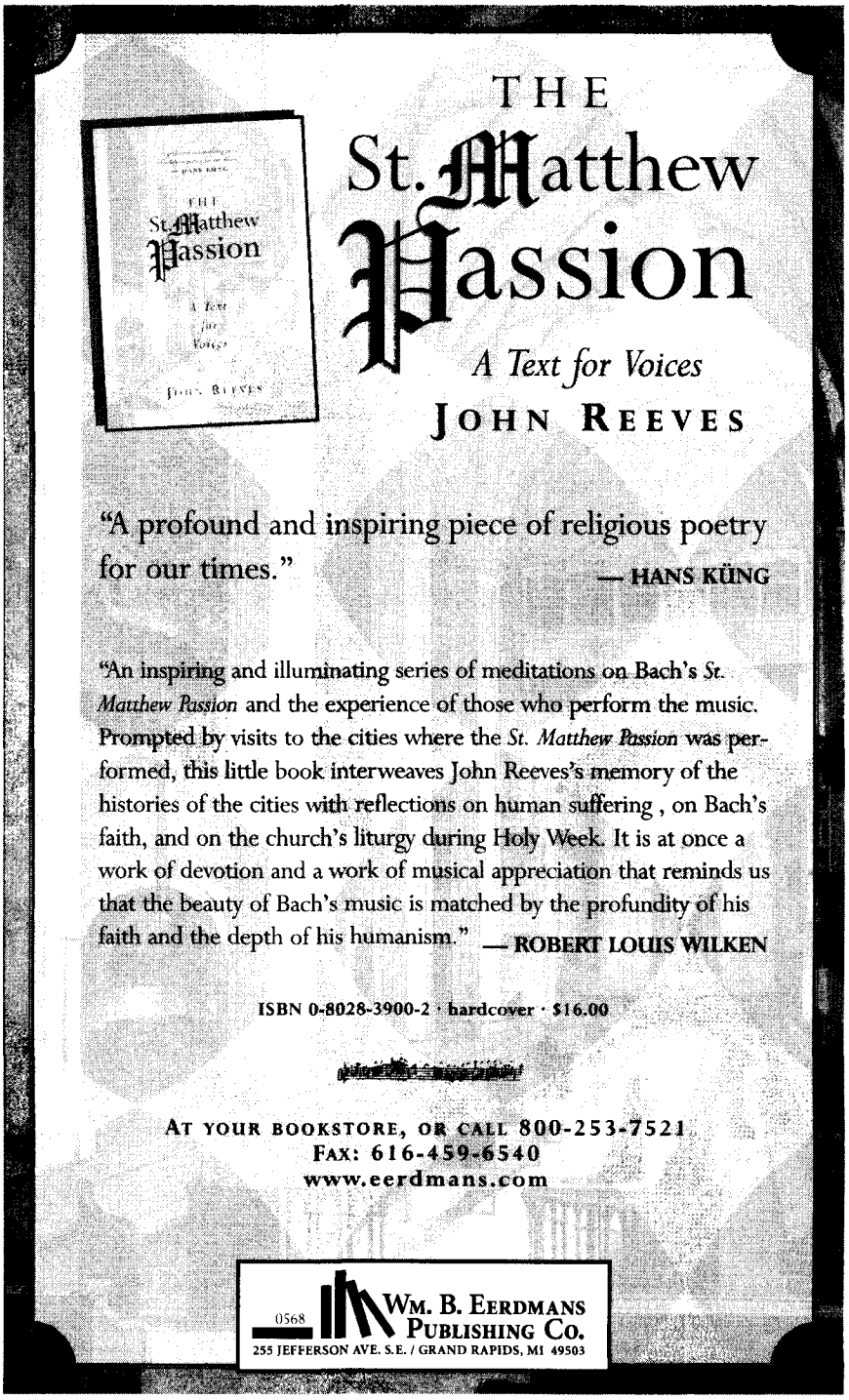
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

viction that, ultimately, things must go well for the universe.

There is a good deal to admire in Gale's account. And yet, curiously, some of the book's most admirable features also turn out to be somewhat problematic. Take, for example, the vigor and philosophic sophistication with which the book is argued. Gale's treatment of James' famous essay on "The Will to Believe" is particularly noteworthy in this regard. In this work, James had argued that we are justified in believing some propositions, even on insufficient evidence, if the option to believe that proposition is live (believable for us), of momentous significance, and unavoidable or forced. (Like Pascal, James was convinced that the option to believe in the existence of God satisfies these conditions for most persons.) Gale takes great pains to show that, in addition to the three conditions explicitly identified by James, another six additional conditions for believing anything on insufficient evidence can be articulated. His treatment of James' argument is ingenious, and ingenuity is most certainly a philosophical trait to be admired. And this chapter is by no means atypical. Throughout the book, creative interpretations of Jamesian perspectives abound, which is all the more impressive because much of this philosophical territory is very well-trodden.

What, then, is the problem with such erudition and thoroughness? To begin with, these qualities make the book unduly demanding on the reader. No mere introduction to James' thought, this study presupposes both considerable philosophical training and a comfortable familiarity with James' writings on the part of its audience. Though not in themselves problematic, these features of the book are in some tension with the author's ambition to "appeal to a wider audience than just professional, academic philosophers," much as James himself had consistently succeeded in doing.

Gale's highly sophisticated style of argumentation has a further implication. Simply put, Gale's approach is that of the contemporary analytical philosopher, an approach quite at odds with the manner in which James sought to advance his case. In Gale's hands, James' artful ruminations are transformed into terse analytical propositions linked together in the form of deductive arguments. This leads him to hold James to standards of consistency and literalness that are misleading at best and deeply distorting at worst.


THE
St. Matthew Passion
A Text for Voices
JOHN REEVES
"A profound and inspiring piece of religious poetry for our times."
— HANS KÜNG
"An inspiring and illuminating series of meditations on Bach's St. Matthew Passion and the experience of those who perform the music. Prompted by visits to the cities where the St. Matthew Passion was performed, this little book interweaves John Reeves's memory of the histories of the cities with reflections on human suffering , on Bach's faith, and on the church's liturgy during Holy Week. It is at once a work of devotion and a work of musical appreciation that reminds us that the beauty of Bach's music is matched by the profundity of his faith and the depth of his humanism." — ROBERT LOUIS WILKEN
ISBN 0-8028-3900-2 · hardcover · $16.00
AT YOUR BOOKSTORE, OR CALL 800-253-7521
FAX: 616-459-6540
www.eerdmans.com
0568
WM. B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING CO.
255 JEFFERSON AVE. S.E. / GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49503

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Scholars will certainly quibble about other elements in Gale's narrative. For instance, while his insight into James' tendency to adapt his remarks to please his audience is useful, he overstates the case. In my view, Gale also underestimates the influence of Charles Peirce, Josiah Royce, Immanuel Kant, and the tradition of German Idealism on James' thought. However, the book succeeds despite these shortcomings. Above all, it should be perceived and valued as a lively set of philosophical reflections for which the encounter with James' thought and writings serves as the primary occasion and stimulus.

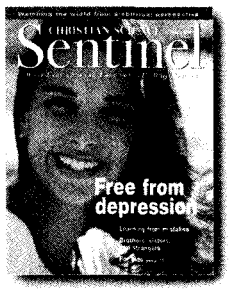
In particular, Gale should be applauded for his focus on James' views on attention. This is not only an aspect of James' thought that often fails to receive the consideration that it deserves, but it is also one that is quite well-suited to persons living in the twenty-first century. Ours is, after all, a "high information" age in which, even more so than for James and his contemporaries, the decision about how we will direct our attention represents an enormous challenge. As James clearly recognized, this is nothing less than a religiously significant challenge, a battle for our spiritual lives. With great nuance and subtlety, he described the importance of living *deliberately*, of not allowing oneself to be swept along by events and circumstances, but of living each moment of life in freedom.

James' claim that we ought to embrace our free potential did not involve the assertion that we always have unlimited control over our environment and circumstances. But we do have some control over ourselves and what James called our "*consents and non-consents.*" Thus whether or not I become ill with the flu is not something that I can perfectly control (even with a flu shot); but I can consent or refuse to consent to the flu once I become ill. That is, I can choose the manner in which I will attend to the fact of my illness and the effort that I will invest in attending.

Spiritual writers in a great variety of religious traditions have understood human freedom in this way, and James surveyed some of their perspectives in *The Varieties of Religious Experience.* On such a view, it becomes possible to consider the submission or consent to the will of God as an act of perfect freedom, even if one has no control over what God wills or the effects of God's willing. This position mediates the theoretical opposition between the active, Promethean self and the passive, mystical self that Gale sketches. As Gale himself admits toward the end of the book, "the aporia due to the clash between the active and passive selves has been made to appear more formidable than it really is."

James is generally thought of as a great "philosopher of religious experience," and Gale characterizes him early on as an "experience junkie." Yet here at the end of the book Gale acknowledges that, for James, the value of any experience consists in its "having a beneficial upshot in the workaday world of the moral agent," what James referred to as "fruits for life." Religious practices, any practices, tend to be embraced and pursued for the quality of experience that they are supposed to provide. That is, we often do things because of the way that they make us feel. But James was more concerned about how certain feelings and experiences would move us to act, shape our conduct, and inspire our efforts. It seems that there is an important lesson here, too, for the twenty-first century, filled as it is with individuals far more accurately described as "experience junkies" than William James.

"No problem can withstand the assault of sustained thinking"
—Voltaire



Spiritual solutions to life's toughest challenges.
Get a FREE copy of this week's *Christian Science Sentinel*
1-800-955-9480 • www.cssentinel.com

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Postmodernizing the Martyrs

Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism. By Daniel Boyarin. *Stanford University Press. 247 pp. $51 cloth, $19.95 paper.*

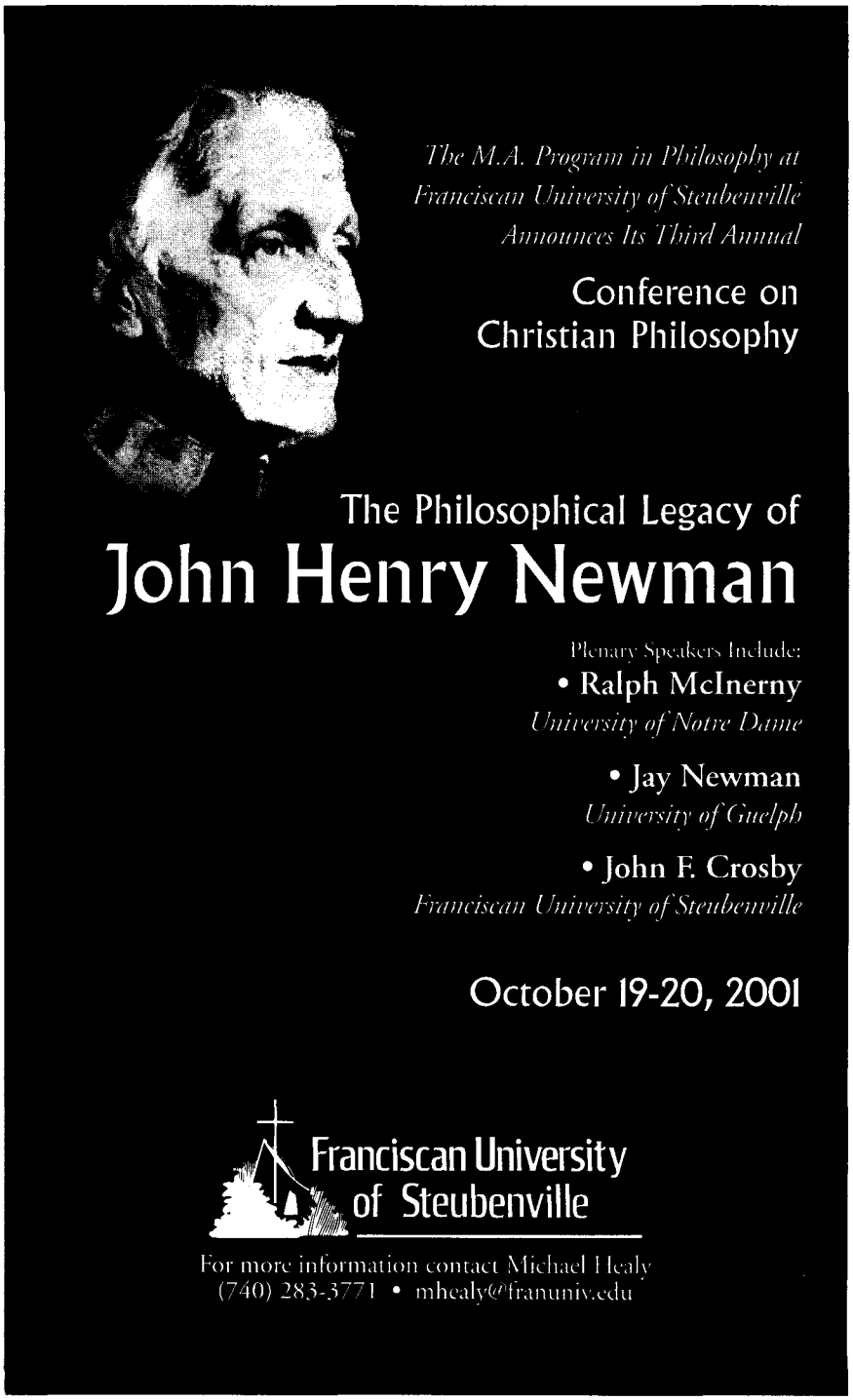
Reviewed by **Brian E. Daley**

A colleague of mine teaches a popular introductory course on Catholic theology with the title, "A Faith to Die For." Besides being a clever turn of a cliché, the name seems to echo a wider fascination today, curiously jarring in our complacent and largely narcissistic culture, with martyrdom. Some recent scholars have attempted to explain such ultimate witness to faith in nonreligious terms: as a gesture of political fanaticism or a cloak for sexual violence; others have redefined it as "voluntary death," a forerunner for ancient sectarians of the modern "choice" of assisted suicide. Pope John Paul II, on the other hand, has pointed to Christian martyrdom as "the high point of witness to moral truth," an indelibly powerful expression both of an individual's affirmation of the moral order and of the holiness of the Church. In an age when it is generally thought that actual martyrs for faith have become few, the message of martyrdom to the wider world seems more puzzling and more engaging than ever.

In this new book, Daniel Boyarin—Taubman Professor of Talmudic Culture at the University of California, Berkeley—offers us a study of martyrdom in both the Jewish and Christian communities of the first four centuries of our era. The first step in a longer investigation, *Dying for God* is intended to be "a case study and an experiment toward new ways of thinking about religious histories in late antiquity." Originally given as four separate lectures, the book is divided into two sections that do not quite form a cohesive whole. The first chapter speculates about the degree to which Jews and Christians are likely to have thought of each other as different in the four centuries or so after the destruction of Jerusalem in 135, while the remaining three chapters analyze the phenomenon of martyrdom as it was understood and witnessed in these two emerging strands of religious literature.

In his elaborately argued first chapter, Boyarin suggests that rab-

Brian E. Daley, S.J., *is a patristic scholar and the Catherine F. Huisking Professor of Theology at the University of Notre Dame.*



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

binic Judaism and early Christianity were probably less two separate religions, each with its own clear understanding of itself, than they were "points on a continuum" defined by the extremes of Marcion, the early Gnostic Christian who totally rejected the traditions of Israel as the work of an inferior God, and "the many Jews for whom Jesus meant nothing." According to Boyarin, "rabbinic Judaism and Christianity . . . can perhaps be most richly read as complexly related subsystems of one religious polysystem, well into late antiquity and even beyond." In making his tentative case, the author draws on a variety of hints in the ancient sources that Christian and Jewish religious practice may, in many places, have overlapped: the possibility that Christians in late-second-century Lyons normally ate kosher meat; the second-century practice of many Christian communities in Asia Minor to celebrate the death of Jesus on the precise day of Passover rather than on the nearest Friday; observance of the Sabbath as well as Sunday as a day of rest and prayer by fourth-century monks in Egypt; joint psalm-singing by fifth-century communities of Jews and Christians on Majorca.

Boyarin does not deny that many documents from these early centuries go to some lengths to point out the differences between Jews and Christians. But "denials of sameness," Boyarin observes, "are precisely what one would expect in situations of difficult difference." The very Jewishness of early Christian practice and self-understanding in many parts of the world may well have been the prime motive for both rabbis and Christian preachers to emphasize their points of opposition. In Boyarin's view, it was only "the birth of the hegemonic Catholic Church" in the fourth century that led to the final definition of orthodox Christianity and rabbinic Judaism as distinct, even opposed and mutually exclusive, religious communities.

IT IS IN THE CONTEXT of conflict over competing Christian and Jewish identities that Boyarin situates his study of martyrdom. Unfortunately, however, this second, much longer part of the book is marred by an argument that is palpably thin and even trails off at times into postmodern jargon. Boyarin spends most of his second chapter reflecting on a story preserved in a tract of the Babylonian Talmud about the famous second-century rabbi, Eliezer. Arrested during the reign of Trajan on suspicion of being a "sectarian"—in Talmudic terms, a Christian—the rabbi escaped, not by roundly denying his involvement with Christians, but by giving an evasive answer. Restored to his disciples, he admitted that the reason for his arrest—in God's providence, if not in Roman law—may have been that he once "took pleasure" in a saying ascribed to Jesus. Boyarin is hesitant to invest the anecdote with a great deal of historical reliability, since it was probably only written down in its present form a century or more after the reported event. Yet he maintains that it reflects a third-century rabbinic consciousness according to which Christians in some sense "are us." For this reason it was all the more necessary to "establish difference" between the two groups in their parallel evolution towards a self-conscious orthodoxy.

In his next section, Boyarin adapts to his purpose an interpretation of early Christian martyrdom offered by a number of feminist theorists (Virginia Burrus, Elizabeth Castelli, Kate Cooper, Nicole Loraux), who suggest that at least by the fourth and fifth centuries narratives of martyrdom are replete with examples of "gender bending": males taking on "female" characteristics such as submissiveness, self-denial, and withdrawal from public space, and females behaving in culturally critical ways. Claiming to find strong sexual overtones in accounts of the deaths of teenage virgins at the paws of hungry lions or the hands of savage male executioners, Boyarin suggests that Christian martyrdom, by the end of the fourth century, had become "an abiding sign of Christian resistance to the regimes of heteronormativity and natalism of the Greco-Roman world." In other

Integrity and Ethics in the Workplace

A weekend conference for professional women and graduate students sponsored by Murray Hill Institute.

October 12 - 14, 2001

Prominent professional women in law, medicine, business and education will address the challenges of maintaining a just and ethical workplace in today's highly competitive environment.

Conference fee:

$175 for professionals
$75 for students

The conference will be held at:

The New York Marriott East Side Hotel
525 Lexington Avenue
New York, NY

For more information, contact:

Murray Hill Institute
243 Lexington Avenue
New York, NY 10016
Tel. (646) 742-2845
email:
www.murrayhillinstitute.org

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

words, Christianity subverted culturally accepted norms of marriage and family.

Although Jewish practice in late antiquity still emphasized marriage and childbearing instead of virginity as the female ideal, Boyarin claims to find hints in Talmudic anecdotes that some of the rabbis, too, expressed their resistance to Roman domination by taking on what he sees as feminine or virginal traits. However, the evidence he produces to back this extraordinary assertion seems, to me at least, contorted and insubstantial. Moreover, the gender-based interpretation of ancient narratives of martyrdom, which Boyarin takes from other writers, often borders on the far-fetched.

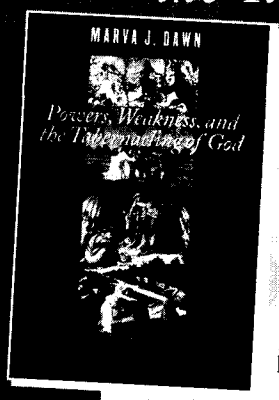
The book's final chapter doesn't improve matters much. There Boyarin turns to the rhetoric (though not explicitly to the theology) of ancient Jewish and Christian texts on martyrdom and proposes, with full postmodern fanfare, "that we think of martyrdom as a 'discourse,' as a practice of dying for God and of talking about it," rather than simply as an act of violence or of witness to faith. "Being killed is an event," Boyarin observes; likewise, "martyrdom is a literary form, a genre." His point seems to be that language, religious interpretation, is what makes martyrdom different from simple persecution, and for three reasons.

First, he sees it as "a ritualized and performative speech act," in which the martyr discloses his or her religious identity: for the Jewish martyr, usually the recitation of the "Shema" (Deuteronomy 6.4-5: "Hear, O Israel . . ."); for the Christian the statement, "*Christianus sum.*" Second, a martyr's death was seen in both communities as fulfilling a divine mandate: walking the way of Christ, or carrying out the command to "love the Lord your God with all your soul." Third, and most implausibly, Boyarin holds that late antique martyr-literature contained "powerful erotic elements," including dream narratives and the language of passionate longing, to express the martyrs' desire for death as an expression of their faith. In his view, accounts of martyrs' deaths in this period "are all about love, about dying for God. What was new in martyrology was the eroticization of death for God, in the representation of martyrdom as the consummation of love, and it was new for both Christians and Jews."

Here again, an important observation about the religious context of

Marva J. Dawn

Powers, Weakness, and the Tabernacling of God



"This may well be the best and most important book Marva Dawn has written. That, of course, is saying a great deal, since she has written quite wonderful books. In this new work Dawn uses her profound reading of Paul's understanding of powers to illumine the challenges before the church. Drawing on the work of Jacques Ellul, she helps us see how the powers insidiously gain influence over our lives. Truly a wonderful book."
— STANLEY HAUERWAS

"Dawn is gifted in clearing the deck of old carelessnesses and inviting us to fresh and urgent, yet not complex, decisions. An important read!"
— WALTER BRUEGGEMANN

"This is the kind of writing and teaching that can save the church from being duped by the 'deceitful tongue' of slick contemporaneity — if we will only listen. Careful and honest exegetical work combined with years of frontline experience in dealing with the lies and illusions of our culture come together here as Marva Dawn brings clarity and urgency to the elusive 'principalities and powers.'"
— EUGENE H. PETERSON

ISBN 0-8028-4770-6 · 186 pages · paperback · $14.00

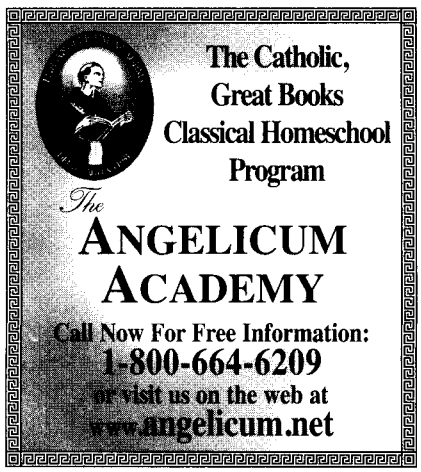
At your bookstore, or call 800-253-7521 · Fax: 616-459-6540
www.eerdmans.com

Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
255 Jefferson Ave. S.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

martyrs' deaths seems to have become skewed by the imposition of contemporary literary theory. Surely a careful reader of ancient Christian or Jewish texts, whether exegesis of the admittedly erotic imagery of the Song of Songs or narratives of persecutorial violence, needs to distinguish carefully, as the ancients did, among the various forms of love. Similarly, he must recognize that expressions of what a modern reader calls passion need not necessarily carry "erotic" overtones for people living in a less sexually charged culture than our own.

This is a learned book, generous in its scholarship, abounding in endnotes—many of which are really appendices or minor bibliographical essays—and redolent with the author's enthusiasm for conceiving of Jewish and Christian origins in new, less mutually exclusive ways. The thesis about those origins with which Professor Boyarin begins is a fascinating one, and the project of testing it in ancient accounts of Jewish and Christian martyrs is promising. Yet the book fails to hold together, perhaps most of all because Boyarin largely avoids any serious discussion of the reasons of faith that motivated ancient martyrs, and instead focuses his analysis on what martyrologies might reveal to contemporary readers about textuality, sexuality, and the construction of the self.



In the end, the question the book raises about early Judaism and early Christianity gets half-buried in the coquettish, self-conscious language of all-too-clever literary theory, and we learn much less of substance than we had hoped. Perhaps future stages of Boyarin's planned voyage of investigation will lead us into deeper waters.

Matters of Life and Death

CULTURE OF DEATH: THE ASSAULT ON MEDICAL ETHICS IN AMERICA. By WESLEY J. SMITH. *Encounter. 285 pp. $23.95.*

***Reviewed by* Richard M. Doerflinger**

AT A RECENT conference on the ethics of withdrawing nourishment and fluids from mentally incompetent patients, I was approached by an acquaintance who is close to retirement age. "Richard," he said in a grave tone, "when I become seriously ill, I want you to promise me one thing." I told him I'd do my best. "Whatever you do," he said, "keep those damn bioethicists out of my hospital room."

Wesley Smith knows all about my friend's concerns. Based on in-depth interviews and a careful survey of today's bioethics literature, he has produced a compelling and frightening indictment of current trends in bioethics. In *Culture of Death: The Assault on Medical Ethics in America*, Smith argues that "a small but influential group of philosophers and health-care policy makers" is working to bring about a culture in which "killing is beneficent, suicide is rational, natural death is undignified, and caring properly and compassionately for people who are elderly, prematurely born, disabled, despairing, or dying is a burden that wastes emotional and financial resources."

Smith has covered some of this ground before. An attorney and consumer rights advocate who has coauthored several books with Ralph Nader, he became alarmed at the rise of the assisted suicide movement in the 1990s and wrote *Forced Exit: The Slippery Slope from Assisted Suicide to Legalized Murder* (1997) to combat it. Since then, Smith has become one of our most tireless and effective opponents of physician-assisted suicide.

His new book digs deeper to show that the drive for assisted suicide is the tip of a deadly iceberg. Scholarly apologists for euthanasia are working from an ideology that denies the equal dignity of all human beings, reordering traditional commitments to the sick and helpless in order to maximize the benefits for more worthwhile or "productive" members of society. This utilitarian "quality of life" ideology threatens not only Judeo-Christian teachings on the sanctity of life, but also American founding principles on unalienable human rights.

SMITH IS CAREFUL here to appeal to the broadest possible audience, for which he has been criticized by some reviewers. He notes that modern secular bioethics often sets itself against religion, and even quotes ethicist Daniel Callahan as saying that "the first thing" bioethics had to do to establish itself was "to push religion aside." But he does not present a sustained argument as to why bioethics needs religious values to avoid slipping into mere procedure and crass cost-benefit analysis. He does not even present a view of abortion (except, briefly, partial-birth abortion), although many bioethicists began their slide into the abyss of value relativism by seeking to justify abortion. He wants to tell a general audience—an audience divided on abortion and diverse or ambivalent

RICHARD M. DOERFLINGER *is Associate Director for Policy Development at the Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities, National Conference of Catholic Bishops.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on religion—that an unelected but powerful elite is quietly undermining everything they once took for granted regarding the treatment of themselves or their loved ones when they are seriously ill. Whatever your views on abortion or religion, he says in effect, you should take up arms against the bioethics elite because the life you save may be your own.

There's nothing wrong with that message as far as it goes, but some believe it is important to go further. For example, Christian bioethicist Gilbert Meilaender, reviewing the book in the February 12 issue of the *Weekly Standard*, faults Smith both for downplaying religion and abortion and for presenting almost the entire profession of bioethics as an enemy of human freedom and dignity. For Meilaender, this oversimplifies the problem and neglects important aspects of the needed solution. Indeed, Meilaender's own masterful *Body, Soul, and Bioethics* (1995) does provide a deeper account of the problem of modern bioethics than Smith does. Yet Smith is such a good prosecuting attorney against people with clearly dangerous ideas that he should not be faulted too much for presenting an incomplete account.

Other critics of Smith's book (including some ethicists who are its targets) make a different charge. They claim that Smith simply exaggerates, falsely equating mainstream bioethics with the views held by a few extremists like the infamous Peter Singer of Princeton University. I disagree. To be sure, Singer is a man pro-life advocates would have to invent if he didn't already exist. He has long held that various animals are more sentient than—and hence have greater moral status than—unborn and newborn humans. His recent assertion that there is nothing inherently wrong in having sexual relations with animals, published after Smith's book was written, has sent more of his colleagues scurrying to distance themselves from his views. But Smith is very effective in showing that Singer's basic ideas about human worth are widely shared (even if not followed through with as much lunatic consistency) throughout the ill-defined profession of bioethics.

In some ways, the problem may be even worse than Smith indicates.

First, Peter Singer is not at the most radical fringe of modern bioethics. He at least believes that *some* people (and animals) deserve to be respected as persons because of an attribute they possess, like the ability to feel

FELLOWSHIP of CATHOLIC SCHOLARS

24TH ANNUAL CONVENTION

"THE CATHOLIC IMAGINATION AND CONTEMPORARY CULTURE"

SPEAKERS AND TOPICS INCLUDE:

Rev. Raymond Gawronski, S.J. -Theological Aspects of Hans Urs von Balthasar
Dr. Carol Abromaitis -The Sacramental Vision in JRR Tolkien
Dr. Robert Reilly -Music and Culture
Dr. Stephen Schloeder -Church Architecture
Dr. Robert Royal -Twentieth Century Catholic Literature
Panel Discussion on Catholic Impact on the Film Industry

Bishop Fabian Bruskewitz of Lincoln, Nebraska will preside over the Vigil Mass celebration and will attend the Cardinal Wright Award banquet.

more information is available online at
www.catholicscholars.org

September 28-30, 2001
Omaha, Nebraska
Host Archdiocese
Elden F. Curtiss, Archbishop

Call
740/282-4005
For a Registration Form

E-mail
info@catholicscholars.org

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pleasure and pain. More radical bioethicists assert that *all* claims of personhood are merely social constructs, that there is no objective quality in *any* human being that requires us to treat him or her as a person.

This is the view of Professor Ronald Green of Dartmouth College, as set forth in his essay "Toward a Copernican Revolution in Our Thinking About Life's Beginning and Life's End" (*Soundings*, Summer 1983). Green's "revolution" amounts to the stunning insight that those of us who wield power in society can band together and define other people (especially the very young and very old) in and out of personhood, depending on how urgently we feel the need to do lethal experiments on them to benefit ourselves. And Ronald Green is no peripheral figure. He was a vice-chair of the National Institutes of Health's Human Embryo Research Panel in 1994, and his essay was cited by the Panel as providing an ethical foundation for the policies it recommended on federally funded embryo research. Compared to some contemporaries who are in the forefront of applying bioethics to public policy, then, Singer may count as a moderate.

Second, the tendency to resolve moral dilemmas by denying the worth of some human lives is not only found among bioethicists and those in their immediate sphere of influence. Unfortunately, a trend toward utilitarian thinking and moral relativism can be found nowadays in many segments of our society, and it would be hard to attribute all of this to the influence of bioethicists. To some extent, the profession has gained influence by telling people what they want to hear and are already inclined to believe.

SMITH IS MASTERFUL in showing that in many cases appeals to patient autonomy mask another agenda. Many in the bioethics elite worship autonomy if patients choose death, but they suddenly become communitarians concerned about social resources when patients and families want life-saving treatment. However, in opposing rationing schemes and "futile care" policies that seek to deny treatments, Smith himself may rely too heavily on individual autonomy. For instance, he proposes obtaining "clear and convincing evidence" of a patient's own wishes before life-preserving care is withdrawn. But this would still allow a great many objectively bad treatment decisions, and its absolute

THE SECOND ONE THOUSAND YEARS

Ten People Who Defined a Millennium

RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS
Editor

Written by a team of renowned scholars, this book treats the second millennium century by century, choosing one historical figure as the prism through which to view each period.

Insightful, authoritative, and a pleasure to read, these narratives not only open intriguing windows on key dimensions of the Christian West but also provide a panoramic view from which to comprehend all of modern history — a view well worth pondering as we begin the third one thousand years.

ISBN 0-8028-4905-9 · 138 pages · paperback · $14.00

1068

WM. B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING CO.
255 JEFFERSON AVE. S.E. / GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49503

At your bookstore, or call 800-253-7521 • Fax: 616-459-6540 • www.eerdmans.com

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

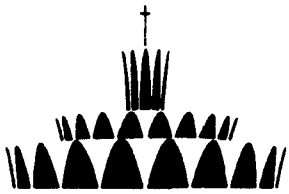
reliance on the patient's own wishes may fuel arguments by others for voluntary euthanasia.

Moreover, Smith occasionally comes close to arguing that hospitals and physicians should have no ethic at all—that because some medical professionals use bad values to deny needed treatments, all value judgments by doctors and hospitals are suspect, and "conscience clauses" protecting them from having to act against their moral convictions may be unwise. Here I must side with critics (like Meilaender) who suggest that inculcating sound values is better than treating doctors as technicians who should blindly follow the wishes of patients.

The issue of health-care rationing and "futile care" policies is complex and cries out for a more thorough analysis than *Culture of Death* can be expected to provide. As we explore solutions other than those rightly criticized in the book, we must acknowledge real problems: health-care resources are not infinite, cost can indeed be part of the "burdens" of treatment, and some patients and families make requests that may have little to do with the objective benefits of treatment.

Smith's book also leaves unresolved precisely what it is in "futile care" policies that is most objectionable. Is it the importing of social cost considerations into individual treatment decisions? Is it the fact that these decisions are made without patients' consent and sometimes against their express wishes? Or is it that the decisions are often based not on the burdens and benefits of a given treatment, but on the judgment that certain patients' lives are not worth living? The last of these possibilities seems most ethically troubling, and it no doubt plays a part in some decisions. And yet, Smith sees it as playing a decisive role in certain decisions to limit care even when that is not clear from the evidence he presents.

On one other point I think Smith has not thought through the full implications of an issue. His critique of the "animal rights" movement is perhaps the harshest section of his book. And to be sure, he demonstrates that many of this movement's theorists (not only Peter Singer) have little regard for the sanctity of human life. But his fierce insistence that those who oppose animal experimentation are endangering human lives by slowing down medical progress is, for me, too familiar from contemporary debates on human embryo research.



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY

A Benedictine monastery of Catholic priests and brothers

Is the Lord calling you to join us

- ✠ in exploring the mystery of God in prayer;
- ✠ in living a common life;
- ✠ in the work of teaching or administration in an outstanding college preparatory school for boys, grades 7 through 12?

For more information, go to
www.stlouisabbey.org

or contact Father Ralph Wright, OSB • Saint Louis Abbey
500 South Mason Road • Saint Louis, MO 63141.
Tel: 1-800-638-1527 or 1-314-434-5774
E-mail: frralph@priory.org

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I do not think animals have the same fundamental rights as humans. But if I did, I would certainly hold the position that Smith ridicules in animal rights advocates—that possible medical benefits are "morally irrelevant" if they require doing something intrinsically wrong. Here Smith misses an opportunity to point out that some thoroughly modern bioethicists have renounced utilitarian thinking and embraced the traditional idea of moral absolutes—even if they may have picked the wrong moral absolute.

But if these are misjudgments, they are minor indeed compared to the great service Wesley Smith has provided. The dangers he documents are quite real—and we are long overdue in waking up to them.

The Seventh Annual
KUYPER LECTURE

Can Force Be Used Justly? Questions of Retributive and Restorative Justice

James Turner Johnson
Department of Religion
Rutgers State University

Responses by:
Daniel Van Ness,
Prison Fellowship International
Kenneth Johnson,
Boston Ten Point Coalition

Thursday,
November 1, 7:30 P.M.
Gordon College, Wenham, MA
Open to the public without charge.
For information call 1.866.275.8784
Cosponsored by

The Center for Public Justice
Gordon College
www.gordon.edu

BRIEFLY NOTED

THE MOBILIZATION OF SHAME: A WORLD VIEW OF HUMAN RIGHTS. By ROBERT F. DRINAN, S.J. *Yale University Press. 194 pp. $24.95.*

Georgetown law professor Drinan fills a gap in the literature with this concise, readable survey of the evolution of human rights protection from the late 1940s to the present. He provides a clear summary of international human rights law for the general reader, including a wealth of detail on the manifold human rights operations of the UN, on U.S. human rights policies over the years, and on regional human rights tribunals in Europe and Latin America. The book falters, however, when it moves from description to analysis and evaluation. The author, for example, places a good deal of weight on undefined terms like "the international community," and reposes many of his hopes for the future of human rights on "the mobilization of shame" by nongovernmental and supranational organizations. But while the former Democratic Congressman from Massachusetts is sharply critical of U.S. human rights policy (especially as conducted by Republican Administrations), he shows less concern about UN agencies, and none at all about the financing, motives, and agendas of the very mixed bag of interest groups known as NGOs.

— *Mary Ann Glendon*

FAITH, REASON, AND POLITICAL LIFE TODAY. Edited by PETER AUGUSTINE LAWLER and DALE MCCONKEY. *Lexington. 272 pp. $24 paper.*

The essays contained in this volume cover a remarkable range of topics, from Aristotle and Solzhenitsyn to Leo Strauss, Flannery O'Connor, and even, in no less than two chapters, *Star Trek*. What unites them is the authors' concern—all too uncommon among political theorists—with the moral and spiritual condition of mankind. Many of the authors take seriously Francis Fukuyama's claim that, with the elimination of communism as a social and political possibility, human history has reached a sort of terminus. In our time, or so the argument runs, liberal democracy has attained such extraordinary power and widespread acceptance that it has come to be thought of as the only legitimate form of government. While the dawning of the universally democratic age promises many goods—among them, peace, economic prosperity, and political freedom for millions, if not billions, of human beings—it may not be altogether good. For the authors in this volume, as it was for Tocqueville and Nietzsche before them, a homogeneously democratic epoch would be one permeated by narcissistic self-satisfaction and moral degradation. Anyone troubled by these unintended byproducts of the democratic age—and hoping to find resources with which to resist them—will relish the serious and sober essays collected in this volume.

THE CONCEPT OF SIN. By JOSEF PIEPER. *St. Augustine's Press. 116 pp. $11 paper.*

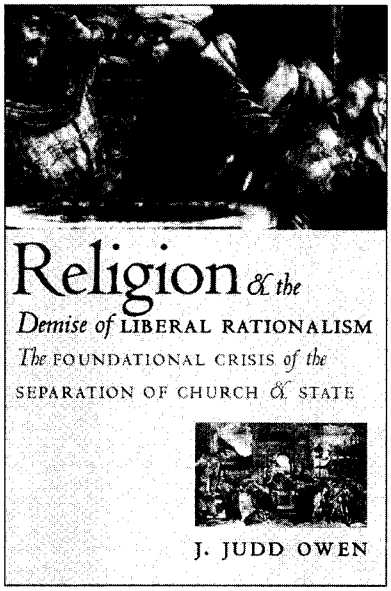
A new and marvelously readable translation, by Father Edward T. Oakes, S.J., of Pieper's incisive investigation of the ever-pressing question of what is meant by "sin." Building on but moving beyond psychological understandings of guilt, and excavating the reality of wrong-being that underlies our wrong-doing, Pieper brings the wisdom tradition of Plato, Augustine, and Aquinas into conversation with moderns, both Christian and anti-Christian, who try to make sense of sin and evil in the human condition. In his usual manner, Pieper pushes philosophical inquiry up to and sometimes a little over the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

edge of theology, but is always respectful of the indispensable part of revelation in attaining true wisdom. Once more St. Augustine's Press of South Bend, Indiana, is to be commended for giving new currency to treasures of the Christian intellectual tradition.

Out of the Depths: The Story of Ludmila Javorova, Roman Catholic Priest. By Miriam Therese Winter. *Crossroad. 258 pp. $19.95.*

Rogue ordinations of priests and consecrations of bishops are nothing new in Christian history, but with the breakaways to the Old Catholic Church following Vatican Council I in the nineteenth century, the phenomenon of *episcopi vagantes* (bishops on the loose) became a pronounced feature of an underworld of apostate Catholics and sectarian Anglicans. In the U.S. today there are dozens of lines of "apostolic succession" in which eccentric leaders with magnificent titles preside over tiny "Catholic" congregations in which almost everybody is a putative priest or bishop. The *episcopi vagantes* story took a peculiar twist during the years of Communist oppression in East-Central Europe, where in some countries much of the Church's ministry operated underground. *Out of the Depths* is the story of a charismatic leader of the "Koinote" network of ministry in Czechoslovakia, Felix Davidek, who was consecrated a bishop under doubtful circumstances and who consecrated seventeen other bishops on his own between 1967 and 1987. He and they ordained an unknown number of priests, including the attempted ordination of at least seven women, of whom Ludmila Javorova is one. All this was done, of course, without the authority of Rome or the national episcopate, and after the collapse of communism the Church tried to straighten out the resulting confusions. Davidek and some of the other putative bishops had already died, but those men whom they had ordained and who were deemed qualified for the priesthood were "conditionally" ordained and their positions regularized under the hierarchy. Since the Catholic Church teaches that she is not authorized to ordain women, there was no question of recognizing the validity of the orders of the women involved. Ludmila Javorova now teaches religion in a grade school and considers herself to be faithful to the Church, although, in her intense loyalty to her



Religion and the Demise of Liberal Rationalism
The Foundational Crisis of the Separation of Church and State
J. Judd Owen
"Does the success of liberalism—the great political philosophy of toleration, equal freedom, and moral and religious pluralism—rest on conformity to a faith that is unjustified and unjustifiable? This deeply learned and thoughtful book forces liberals and their critics to face difficult and enduring foundational questions. Those concerned with justice and public justification in conditions of deep moral and religious diversity need to confront this book."—Stephen J. Macedo, author of *Diversity and Distrust: Civic Education in a Multicultural Democracy*
Paper $16.00

The University of Chicago Press
1427 East 60th Street, Chicago, IL 60637
www.press.uchicago.edu

A Must Read series of books about sex addiction that contain principles that apply to all addictions.

"How To Stay Away From Lust One Day At a Time" is a compelling series of books that uses the first book of Moses, Genesis, in its focus on lust. The series transfuses a spiritual awakening to anyone whose life is affected by compulsive sexual behavior and is searching for ways to deal with it.

If you suffer from any addiction and believe in the power of prayer this new series can profoundly improve your life.

SPECIAL INTRODUCTORY OFFER
ORDER VOLUME 1 FOR ONLY $9.95 + $3. S. & H.

800-380-3704

VOLUMES 1-4 $49.95 + $4.00 S & H

MONEY BACK GUARANTEE

Use Your Credit Card or send your check or money order to:
Emmet L. Billroy Publishers, Dept. FT
Suite 300 PMB 741• 2711 Centerville Rd. Wilmington, DE 19808
Visit our web site at www.billroy.com

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

friend and mentor, Felix Davidek, she also thinks of herself as a priest in "spirit" if not in "law." Her reflections on the priesthood and the Christian life are frequently affecting, and she obviously has little sympathy for the Women's Ordination Conference, the *National Catholic Reporter*, and others in the U.S. who have tried to use her peculiar circumstance in promoting the ordination of women. It would seem that the author of *Out of the Depths* intends this book to be an instrument serving that cause. In that connection, the book is of slight consequence since it is no more than an interesting footnote to the long and colorful history of *episcopi vagantes*. It is very much worth reading, however, as an account of one particularly curious aspect of a strange religious underworld created by Communist tyranny.

HAYEK: A BIOGRAPHY. By ALAN EBENSTEIN. *St. Martin's. 402 pp. $29.95.*

Best known for his classic defense of liberty and polemic against statism, *The Road to Serfdom*, Friedrich Hayek was deservedly honored by the Nobel Prize as one of the most influential economic and social thinkers of the twentieth century. This biography is mostly a cobbling together of facts and ideas, but what it lacks in literary grace is partially made up for in the author's objectivity in evaluating the theories and personalities that shaped the "Austrian school" and its continuing impact, largely through the University of Chicago. Ebenstein attends to the strong streak of utopianism in Hayek's belief that the free market, given effective legal guarantees for property and price fluctuations, would lead to universal prosperity and peace. Hayek died in 1992 at age ninety-three and at his Catholic funeral the priest said that he "had a continuous internal battle with the concept we call God." On Ebenstein's account, Hayek had slight interest in either the concept or the reality, but he may be wrong about that. On that subject, Hayek's writings are atypically unclear.

CHURCH UNITY AND THE PAPAL OFFICE. Edited by CARL E. BRAATEN and ROBERT W. JENSON. *Eerdmans. 184 pp. $20 paper.*

Coming out of a conference on John Paul II's encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* that brought together many of the people you would most want to hear on this subject (Edward Idris Cardinal Cassidy, J. A. DiNoia, Stephen Sykes,

READING JOHN WITH ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

Ressourcement and the Fourth Gospel

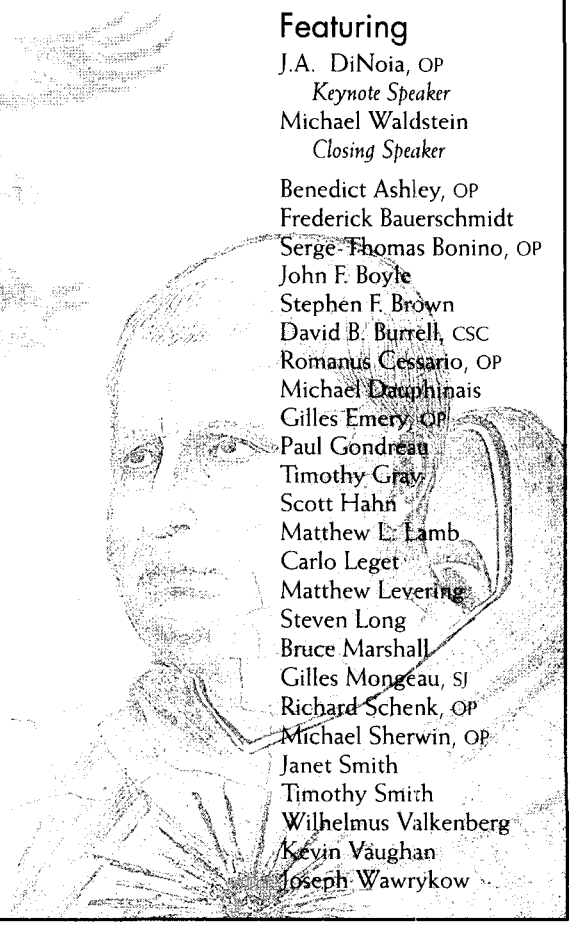
Breaking the barriers that separate modern from pre-critical exegesis and speculative theology

October 5–6, 2001
Hyatt Regency, Dearborn, Michigan
A $99 registration fee includes:
- All Conference Sessions
- Refreshments and a social

Students and seminarians are encouraged to attend for a reduced registration price of $20.

For more information or to register
Visit our website at **www.avemaria.edu**
or call our toll-free number (866) 262-9550.

Sponsored by
Ave Maria College
300 West Forest Avenue
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197



Featuring
J.A. DiNoia, OP
Keynote Speaker
Michael Waldstein
Closing Speaker

Benedict Ashley, OP
Frederick Bauerschmidt
Serge-Thomas Bonino, OP
John F. Boyle
Stephen F. Brown
David B. Burrell, CSC
Romanus Cessario, OP
Michael Dauphinais
Gilles Emery, OP
Paul Gondreau
Timothy Gray
Scott Hahn
Matthew L. Lamb
Carlo Leget
Matthew Levering
Steven Long
Bruce Marshall
Gilles Mongeau, SJ
Richard Schenk, OP
Michael Sherwin, OP
Janet Smith
Timothy Smith
Wilhelmus Valkenberg
Kevin Vaughan
Joseph Wawrykow

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

George Weigel, David Yeago, and the editors), this book provides an accurate picture of ecumenical thinking about the Petrine ministry—at least among Catholics, Lutherans, and Anglicans—at the beginning of the millennium. As for the prospect of "church unity," it is fair to say that the book is stronger in good intentions than on proposals or expectations.

SAME-SEX MATTERS: THE CHALLENGE OF HOMOSEXUALITY. Edited by CHRISTOPHER WOLFE. *Spence. 283 pp. $14 paper.*

This is an important book. The essays by noted authorities address point by point the arguments advanced by the homosexual movement—moral, legal, historical, and medical. The tone is generally calm, urgent, caring, and non-polemical. There are few issues on which people who usually trust intuitive and traditional wisdom so often get cold feet in saying out loud what they believe to be true. *Same-Sex Matters* should stiffen spines, clear minds of cant, and contribute to moving beyond slogans toward civil argument.

SIGNS OF INTELLIGENCE: UNDERSTANDING INTELLIGENT DESIGN. Edited by WILLIAM A. DEMBSKI and JAMES M. KUSHINER. *Brazos. 224 pp. $12.99 paper.*

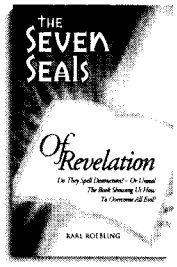
The editors and some of the contributors—e.g., Phillip E. Johnson, Nancy Pearcey, and Michael Behe—are familiar to the readers of these pages. In fourteen short essays this book succeeds admirably in pulling together in a welcoming form the many aspects of the "intelligent design" debate—scientific, cultural, theological, and educational. When people ask what all the fuss and excitement is about, send them to *Signs of Intelligence.*

ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND CHRISTIAN SCHOLARSHIP. By ANTHONY J. DIEKEMA. *Eerdmans. 214 pp. $22 paper.*

Of course nobody's perfect, but among Christian institutions of higher education Calvin College in Grand Rapids has done a remarkable job of advancing both of the great goods in this book's title. Diekema, former president of Calvin, enlivens his argument that these goods are friends and not enemies with accounts of controversies in his own experience as teacher and administrator.

PERSPECTIVES IN A CHANGING ERA
BOOKS BY KARL ROEBLING

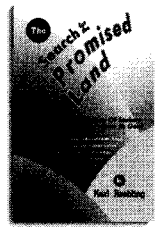
Judeo-Christian • Bible Based • Nondenominational • Indexed



The Seven Seals of Revelation

Do They Spell Destruction? – Or Unseal The Book Showing Us How To Overcome All Evil?

Over 200 Bible References $14.95
ISBN 0942910-17-6 *Paper 205 pp.*

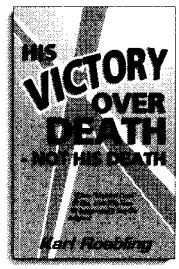


The Search for the Promised Land

The New/Old Civilization of Seekers for the Spiritual Land Pursues its Goal.

"...recommended reading for all those with an interest in spirituality..." (Midwest Book Review)

150 Bible References $14.95
ISBN 0942910-16-8 *Paper 240 pp.*



His Victory Over Death –Not His Death

Jesus "Abolished Death" (II Tim. 1:10) Opening the Way for All Christian Overcomers

75 Bible References $12.95
ISBN 0942910-19-2 *Paper 80 pp.*

ORDER FROM *your* bookstore *or* www.amazon.com (Books: Karl Roebling)
or www.dynapress.com (money back) • e-mail: itsdifferent@dynapress.com
P.O. Box 150217 • Altamonte Springs, FL 32715-0217

APOSTOLIC WITNESS IN A POST-CHRISTIAN AGE

An Ecumenical International SEAD Conference

January 10 – 12, 2002

Just how religiously odd is the larger world in which the Christian Gospel is preached today? And is the Church of the apostles equipped for a faithful witness in the midst of this culture? This conference explores some of the challenges these questions raise, touching on matters of doctrine, worship, philosophy, formation, culture and evangelism.

Presenters include Rodney Clapp (Episcopal, USA), Robert Louis Wilken (Roman Catholic, USA), Rusty Reno (Episcopal, USA), Marva Dawn (Lutheran, USA), Tom Smail (Anglican, UK), George Sumner (Anglican, Canada)

To be held at
The Cathedral Church of St. Luke and St. Paul, 126 Coming Street, Charleston, SC

Visit our new SEAD website: seadinternational.com for details

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A DESERT IN BOHEMIA. By JILL PATON WALSH. *St. Martin's. 332 pp. $23.95.*

A complex story simply told. In a Czech land called "Comenia" that could be Bohemia, first the Nazis and then the Russians impose terror and devastation, through which the author traces the fate of several families, including that of an aristocratic woman who both supported the Nazis and saved the lives of Jews. Some of the characters accept permanent exile in England, for others England is home, and for yet others there is, with the fall of communism, an irresistible desire to go back and build on the rubble. *A Desert in Bohemia* is a welcome addition to the growing literature on what happened to ordinary and not so ordinary people in the bloody second half of the twentieth century. Written as a novel, the book conveys a powerful sense of reality in the lives of people who are not sure what it was that they did and what it was that just happened to them.

Trevecca Nazarene University
School of Religion
Graduate Programs in Religion

"Engendering a Christian construal of the world"

- Master of arts and doctor of arts degrees
- The opportunity to pursue graduate work in theology, Bible, and pastoral arts
- Class scheduling that is compatible with your present assignment
- Fully approved by the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges

Master's of arts (M.A.) in theology, Bible, and pastoral arts
For parish ministers, thoughtful laypersons, and college undergraduates seeking a graduate degree. Courses offered for ministry preparation and enhancing an understanding of the Christian faith.

Doctor of arts (D.A.) in theology and Bible
For missionary educators, parish ministers, denominational leaders, education specialists, and Bible college/college professors seeking a doctorate.

For information on admission procedures and for application forms contact the following:

Henry Spaulding II, Graduate Advisor
School of Religion
Trevecca Nazarene University
333 Murfreesboro Road
Nashville, TN 37210
615-248-1378
Fax 615-248-7417
E-mail religion@trevecca.edu
Hspaulding@trevecca.edu

BEYOND RETRIBUTION: A NEW TESTAMENT VISION FOR JUSTICE, CRIME, AND PUNISHMENT. By CHRISTOPHER D. MARSHALL. *Eerdmans. 301 pp. $24 paper.*

A professor of New Testament in New Zealand provides a detailed and often intriguing argument for what is variously called redemptive, curative, or restorative justice. For better or worse, the elaborate investigation of, for instance, the connections between St. Paul's teaching on justification and the criminal justice system will be totally inaccessible—and, if accessible, implausible—to anyone within hailing distance of policy discussions about crime and punishment. 'Tis a pity, for it is a subject very much in need of moral and theological reflection.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THE NEW YORK TIMES. By WILLIAM PROCTOR. *Broadman & Holman. 308 pp. $14.99 paper.*

The message behind the "culture creep" promoted by the *Times* is a "gospel," says veteran reporter Proctor, because it is adhered to with religious-like devotion both in the editorial and news sections of that influential medium. The gospel is determinedly set against what the paper views as "deadly sins," such as religious certainty, almost any kind of conservatism, the Second Amendment, and even the slightest challenge to the unlimited abortion license. Proctor amply and carefully documents his indictment, and the book will be of value to anyone who doubts his thesis. Others might think that he is at times belaboring the obvious. But then, it is the obvious that is too often ignored.

MORE MONEY, MORE MINISTRY. Edited by LARRY ESKRIDGE and MARK NOLL. *Eerdmans. 429 pp. $20 paper.*

"They're just in it for the money." It is a criticism not uncommonly heard of the many entrepreneurs of the religious world broadly described as "evangelical Protestant." And, of course, the criticism is true of some. But that obvious point is not nearly so interesting as the complexities explored in these essays that try to understand both the boosterism and conscientious uneasiness that mark the relationship between money and ministry. The book has stirred salutary debate and introspection among evangelicals.

THE HOLOCAUST: NEVER TO BE FORGOTTEN. Edited by HELGA CRONER et al. *Paulist. 94 pp. $9.95 paper.*

A valuable set of reflections on the Holy See's document *We Remember* by Avery Cardinal Dulles, Rabbi Leon Klenicki, and Edward Idris Cardinal Cassidy. Klenicki effectively presents Jewish dissatisfactions with the document, Dulles places the document into the historical context of Jewish-Catholic relations, and Cassidy provides an insider's view of how the document came about. This little book is an important addition to the vast literature on questions that will remain troubled and troubling.

RECONCILING FAITH AND REASON: APOLOGISTS, EVANGELISTS, AND THEOLOGIANS IN A DIVIDED CHURCH. By THOMAS P. RAUSCH. *Liturgical Press. 134 pp. $14 paper.*

A theologian of Loyola Marymount in Los Angeles sets forth in brief compass an overview of conflicts within American Catholicism, advocating a "common ground" approach to living together in a Church that is, he believes, stronger and healthier than such conflicts may suggest.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

Will All Be Saved?

The question of universalism—whether all will, in the end, be saved—is perennially agitated in the Christian tradition. A notable proponent of that view was the great Origen, who, in the third century, set forth a theologically and philosophically complex doctrine of "Apocatastasis" according to which all creatures, including the devil, will be saved. "Origenism"—which is not necessarily the same thing as Origen taught—has been condemned from time to time, with the Emperor Justinian trying, unsuccessfully, to get a total condemnation at the Second Council of Constantinople in 553. Among theologians and church historians, there has been something of a rediscovery and reappreciation of Origen in recent decades, helped along in significant part by the voluminous writings of Hans Urs von Balthasar. The universalism question came in for broader discussion with the publication of Balthasar's little book *Dare We Hope "That All Men Be Saved"?* (1988). Balthasar's is a very careful argument, clearly distinguishing between universal salvation as a *hope* and universal salvation as a *doctrine*. He supports the former and rejects the latter. In sum: we do not know; only God knows; but we may hope.

While my book *Death on a Friday Afternoon*, published last year, is intended not as an exercise in systematic theology but as a poetic-devotional reflection on the seven last words from the cross, I do indicate there my essential agreement with Balthasar's position. I confess to being caught off guard by the vehemence of some criticisms on that score, and not only from putative defenders of orthodoxy who have personal axes to grind. Let me not exaggerate the problem: the book has been marvelously well received, for which I am grateful, and many people have expressed their disagreement with the published criticisms, for which I am also grateful. Nonetheless, when some people whose judgment you generally respect have misunderstood what you wrote, a clarifying word may be in order. Of course, I also hope that people will go back and read what I actually wrote in *Death on a Friday Afternoon*.

The hope that all will be saved is precisely that, a hope. It is not a doctrine, never mind a dogma. But some respond that we cannot even hold the hope, since it clearly contradicts the revealed truth that many, if not most, will be eternally damned. A different and much more troubling objection is that it makes no sense to be a Christian if, in fact, one can be saved without being a Christian. In this view, the damnation of others, maybe of most others, is essentially related to the reason for being a Christian. The joy of our salvation is contingent upon the misery of their damnation. If it is possible that all will be saved, it is asked, why not eat, drink, and be merry?

One critic goes so far as to write about all the wrong things that he would really like to do, that he would prefer to do over what he is doing, and that he would do, were it not for the fear of eternity in hell. It follows, he contends, that, without the damnation of many, perhaps of most, there is no point in being a Christian. This, I suggest, is profoundly wrongheaded and spiritually perverse. For one thing, one cannot rationally and knowingly choose to live contrary to God's will, since to do so is contrary to one's own nature, which nature is to live in accord with God's will. One avoids sin because to sin is to act against God and against oneself, not because, or not chiefly because, of the threat of future punishment. More precisely, punishment, understood as damnation, is the culmination of having lived against one's highest good, namely, God. It is doubtful that one could really want life with God forever if one does not want life with God here and now.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Generosity of God

Such a perverse view is also more than a little like that of the laborers in the vineyard who complained that those who came at the last hour received the same reward as those who had worked all day. The master replies, "Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity? So the last will be first, and the first last" (Matthew 20). Some of the critics of the hope for universal salvation do indeed seem to begrudge the generosity of God entailed in that outcome. Theirs is a position of resentment dressed up as a claim of justice. "What was the point of my working so hard and so long if God is going to let in the riffraff on equal terms? It's unfair!" The eschatological upsetting of such attitudes (the last will be first and first last) is a constant in the teaching of Jesus.

Others, however, raise questions that should be taken very seriously. It would be absolutely wonderful, they say, if all were to be saved, but the Bible is very clear that that is not the case. There is no denying the powerful presence of passages suggesting a destiny of separation from God (e.g., Matthew 7:13ff., 25:31-46; Mark 9:45-48; Luke 16:23; John 3:36.) As there is also no denying the New Testament passages suggesting the redemption of the entire cosmos (e.g., Colossians 1:19-20; 1 Corinthians 15:22,28; Romans 5:18, 11:33-36; Philippians 2:10-11). If one gives priority to the latter passages, then the former may be understood as admonitory and cautionary, solemn warnings of a terrible possibility. If one gives priority to the former passages, it is not clear how we are to understand the latter. The passages cited in support of universal redemption can and often have been interpreted in other ways, as have the passages cited in support of the damnation of some or many. The Church in her wisdom has not definitively settled these exegetical disputes.

It is objected that Matthew 25, for instance, is "predictive." The outcome is certain: "And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." Yes, certainly, people who live that way until the very end will go to hell. But what if, having lived that way, they at the very end repent? Recall the thief on the cross. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reads: "God predestines no one to go to hell; for this, a willful turning away from God (a mortal sin) is necessary, and persistence in it until the end. In the Eucharistic liturgy and in the daily prayers of her faithful, the Church implores the mercy of God, who does not want 'any to perish, but all to come to repentance'" (1037). How can we know that anyone persists in mortal sin until the end? We cannot. Must we not hope that, according to God's desire (2 Peter 3:9), all will repent? If not, how can we pray that that is the case? Is it possible to pray for an outcome without hoping for it? Is it possible to pray and hope for something that you know cannot be?

In *Death on a Friday Afternoon*, I write: "From the cross Christ has already counted them all. And he assures us that none of them will be lost. He also sends out those whom we call missionaries to let them know they have been found." The second sentence is susceptible of misunderstanding, and some have done their best to misunderstand it. The point of the sentence is not that everyone will be saved. The point, repeatedly underscored elsewhere in the book, is that absolutely no one is beyond the reach of God's love in Christ. All are found, and therefore are not lost. That some may choose not to accept the gift of being found is quite another matter. We pray and hope that all will accept the gift of salvation that is most surely available to all. At least for Catholics, the teaching is definitive: God denies no one the grace necessary for salvation.

A Sordid Reality

Make no mistake: hell is real. Eternal separation from God is a distinct possibility to be feared, and to be feared first of all for ourselves. The passages of warning are to be taken with utmost, indeed ultimate, seriousness. God only knows who, if any, are damned. Our unqualified prayer is that God's will be done. Do I know beyond a possibility of doubt that I will not be damned? Of course not. To answer otherwise is the sin of presumption. I believe, I have a confident faith, that I will be saved because of the mercy of God in Christ. It is sometimes said that Protestants, who subscribe to "justification by faith," *know* they will be saved, while Catholics only *hope* they will be saved. That is a distinction without a difference. Faith is hope anticipated, and hope is faith disposed toward the future.

"Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." That is the prayer that is absolutely without qualification. Only God knows God's will completely, and it is enough that God knows. In the splendid notes to the new translation of Dante's *Inferno* by Robert and Jean Hollander (Doubleday) we are told:

> Beatrice's insistence [in Canto II] that she is not "touchable" by the grim powers of the pains of hell underlines the marginality of sin for the saved. Hell is simply not of concern to them. It is important to know, as one begins reading the poem, what one can only know once one has finished it: no soul in purgation or in grace in heaven has a thought for the condition of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

damned (only the damned themselves do). Their concern for those who do not share their redeeming penitence or bliss is reserved for those still alive on earth, who have at least the hope of salvation. Hell, for the saved, is a sordid reality of which it is better not to speak.

We *know* that some are saved. At least Catholics know, on the basis of infallible teaching, that Mary, the mother of the Lord, is saved. And, although theologians are not of one mind on this, it is commonly accepted that those who are formally canonized are definitively declared to be in heaven. With respect to all the faithful departed, we are invited to have a generous expectation, "that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope" (1 Thessalonians 4:13). Moreover, there is plenty of room for the saved in the New Jerusalem, which we are told is approximately fifteen hundred miles in height, breadth, and length (Revelation 21:16). That's a city of a size that would cover more than half the continental U.S., and it will be more than a thousand miles high. It would seem there is ample space for everybody to be saved. (Where people who don't like cities will go, I don't know.) The details may not be meant literally, of course, but the picture of a well-populated heaven can, I think, be trusted.

How About Judas?

By way of contrast, we do not know who, if any one, is in hell. As John Paul II points out in his remarkable little book *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, the Church has never taught that even Judas Iscariot is damned. A critic writes me that he will not be satisfied until I publicly declare my certain belief in a "populated hell." I am afraid that he will have to remain dissatisfied. How on earth (emphasizing *on earth*) can I know for sure that hell is populated? One day we will know even as we are known (1 Corinthians 13), and presumably the saints in glory know now (although, as Dante suggests, they're not much interested), but we—here on earth and now—simply do not know.

There is that enigmatic statement of Jesus about Judas, "It would have been better for that man if he had not been born" (Matthew 26:24, Mark 14:21). He does not explicitly say that Judas is in hell but, on the other hand, it would seem that he cannot be in heaven. Were he in heaven—or in purgatory on his way to heaven—how could one say that it would have been better for him if he had not been born? Some theologians have speculated about another possibility. Since evil does not have independent ontological status but is the absence of good, perhaps the fate of Judas is that of total annihilation. Such a fate, joined to his terrible betrayal, would seem to warrant saying of him that it would have been better had he not been born. In any event, as John Paul II notes, the Church does not teach that even Judas is in hell. That does not mean he is not in hell; only that we cannot teach what we do not know.

The Demands of Justice

Here enters another consideration that is commonly expressed: our sense of justice requires that we believe some people are eternally punished. It seems the favorite candidate here is Adolf Hitler. As one critic writes, "If Hitler is not in hell, there is little reason why I, with my much lesser sins, should be in fear of going there." There are all kinds of things wrong with that argument. Hitler may have repented, turning to the mercy of God, even as his finger pressed the trigger. Plus, rating "big" and "little" sinners is a very dubious business. I expect there are many petty tyrants in homes and offices who are every bit as disposed to evil as was Hitler, but who have a more restricted range of opportunity for acting on that disposition. Moreover, consider the Apostle who writes, "I am the chief of sinners" (1 Timothy 1:16), and so should we all say of ourselves, since, when it comes to sinners, we know chiefly about ourselves. Further, it is not our sense of justice but God's perfect justice that is to be satisfied. And, be it noted, that perfect justice is satisfied by the perfect sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

Then, too, there is the matter of purgatory. Not only Catholics, but thinkers such as C. S. Lewis and the contemporary Methodist theologian Jerry Walls suggest it is only fitting that there be an experience, and perhaps a long and painful experience, of purgation before we are ready for the beatific vision. The master's reproach to the disgruntled laborers in the vineyard ("Do you begrudge my generosity?") notwithstanding, there is something that seems not right about the idea that Hitler or Chairman Mao or (enter your favorite villain here) should get to heaven without paying a steep price for their crimes here on earth. Are they finally to be treated the same as, say, Mother Teresa? That too seems not right. So maybe they have thousands of years (as we reckon time) in purgatory. And maybe, as one friend whimsically suggests, Hitler in heaven will be forever a little dog to whom we will benignly condescend. But he will be grateful for being there, and for not having received what he deserved. (As will we all be grateful for being there and not receiving what we deserve.) But with such thoughts we are in a realm of speculation and whimsy far beyond things on which we have a certain word from God, and far beyond our capacity to understand.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Why Evangelize?

So may we hope that all will be saved? Answering that question in the affirmative, some contend, undercuts the rationale of Christian evangelization. I respond to that objection in *Death on a Friday Afternoon* and in an extended commentary on John Paul's encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (The Mission of the Redeemer) (FT, October 1991). I will not expand on that response here, but the gist of the argument is that the command and impulse to evangelize is premised not on the bad news that we do not know but on the good news (i.e., "gospel") that we do know. To be sure, good news may be good in relation to the bad, but there is enough bad news that we know for sure that we do not need to pretend to know more bad news than we do in order to make the good news good. We know about God's saving work in Christ, and that "there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). As both *Redemptoris Missio* and the year 2000 statement of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dominus Iesus*, make clear, everyone who is saved is saved because of Christ, even if they have never heard the gospel. If they are in heaven, they will certainly know then that it is because of God's reconciling work in Christ. As it is usually put, faith's response to the gospel proclaimed and enacted in word and sacrament is the "ordinary means" of salvation. That is exactly right. At the same time, God is not limited to the ordinary. Why evangelize? Evangelization is most importantly driven by the means of salvation revealed, by Christ's clear command, and by the sharing of fellowship so that "our joy may be complete" (1 John 1:4). We know what we are to do, and why. But the fullness of what God can and will do for the world that He loves is not limited to what we do.

We may come at our question in a different way by trying this thought experiment: Do you know anyone of whom you would *not* say that you hope he or she is saved? Imagine that you could know everyone who now lives, who has ever lived, or will ever live in the future. Of whom could you say that you hope they are eternally damned? Perhaps in a fit of anger—or in an act of presumption in which you identified your moral indignation with God's perfect justice—you have said that you hope somebody is eternally damned, but you know you were wrong in saying or thinking that. "Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us." Is it possible to forgive someone and, at the same time, hope he goes to hell? I think not. After you have, in this thought experiment, said to absolutely everybody, "I hope you will be saved," have you not declared your hope that all will be saved?

Quite apart from such a thought experiment, the fact is that we all pray that all may be saved. Is it possible to pray for that without hoping for that? I think not. It follows that we pray, and therefore we hope, that all will be saved. Catholics by the millions pray the rosary every day, adding at the end of each decade, *O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell, lead all souls to heaven, especially those most in need of thy mercy.*

We pray and we hope, but we do not *know* that that will be the case. I have a terrible fear that it will not be the case. If all are not saved, if many or most are lost, I do not know—despite the many elegant explanations that have been proposed—how to square that with biblical passages and the theo-logic that suggest universal redemption. But God knows, and that is enough. We know that we are to proclaim the saving gospel, we know what we hope will be the case, but we know these things in the full recognition that the ultimate working out of God's mercy and justice eludes our certain grasp.

How to Disagree

Nevertheless, I expect that I may not have convinced everyone that we can and should hope that all will be saved. In that event, I hope we can disagree without quarreling, remembering Chesterton's observation that the problem with a quarrel is that it spoils an argument. And, as in all such disagreements, we do well to keep in mind the rule of Richard Baxter (famously reiterated by John XXIII), "In necessary things, unity; in doubtful things, liberty; in all things, charity."

To which one need only add this necessary thing: all our puzzling, disputing, and speculating must finally give way to the most pure act of faith, which is doxology. So it was with St. Paul in his perplexity at the end of Romans 11, and so it must be with us. At the end of all our trying to understand, we join in declaring:

> For God has consigned all to disobedience, that He may have mercy upon all. O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable His ways! "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counselor?" "Or who has given a gift to Him that he might be repaid?" For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen.

FT

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

We Piped and You Did Not Dance

Rabbi Daniel Lapin has just about had it. He heads up a renewal organization called Toward Tradition and takes sharp exception to the statements of Abraham Foxman of the Anti-Defamation League. You remember when, during the Pope's visit, Syrian leader Assad said some rudely stupid things about Jews. The Pope declined to get into a spitting match with Assad then and there, so Foxman complained about the Pope's "sin of silence." Reference to papal "silence" is, of course, intended to evoke the old canard about Pius XII's alleged silence during the Holocaust. A very odd kind of silence that was, with Jewish organizations at the time gratefully praising Pius for being "a lone voice of conscience" when other leaders, such as Roosevelt and Churchill, were indeed silent about the Holocaust.

But that doesn't stop Abe Foxman. About the same time as the Syrian visit, there was a media flap over some prominent Christians who opined that candor compels a recognition that the Jews of the time were not entirely uninvolved in the crucifixion of Jesus. Talk about pushing Mr. Foxman's buttons. He charged that "It seems to be open season on Jews and Judaism." Right. Next week come the pogroms. Back to Rabbi Lapin: "I wish we could all calm down a little. I mean, were it not for the ADL's screaming, hardly anyone would know about Assad's pathetic insults. And just what was the elderly pontiff supposed to do as Assad blathered away in Arabic—jump up, run across the stage, and start strangling the guy? But I imagine Abe Foxman was facing a shortfall in fundraising this quarter, or something like that. Ten thousand little old Jewish grandmothers must be really worked up and writing their checks to ADL."

Foxman even took out an ad in the *New York Times* censuring the Pope. Mr. Foxman did temper his criticism with the generous acknowledgment, "He's earned our patience." Pope John Paul has earned Mr. Foxman's patience. Talk about testicular brassworks. Of whom does one say, "We must be patient with him"? Maybe a retarded child or a recovering alcoholic. The Pope is no doubt grateful that Mr. Foxman is willing to be patient with him.

To be fair, Mr. Foxman was not alone. The *Jerusalem Post* also editorially ranted against the Pope's "sinful silence." Eugene Fisher of the U.S. bishops' office for Jewish affairs has just about had it, too. He wrote the paper, "I must protest your editorial characterizing of Pope John Paul II's recent actions in Damascus as 'silence' and 'sinful.' Simply because the Pope did not respond to President Assad's pathetic and transparent appeal to hoary religious bigotry in the way you would prefer does not justify your excoriation of him." Fisher then went on to quote what the Pope actually did say on the occasion about Jews, Muslims, and Christians working together for peace and in mutual respect. Reasonable people might have taken that as a response to Assad's tirade.

Not Cragg Hines of the *Houston Chronicle*, however. He devotes a column to comparing the Pope in Damascus with centuries of putative crimes by Catholicism against all and sundry, concluding with a sneer that popes don't have to say, "We're sorry." Never mind that a good many people think that this Pope has said "We're sorry" more than one time too many. I hasten to add that I don't think so. It's part of his well-considered campaign aimed at the "purification of memories." One does wish, however, that others would show at least some inclination to reciprocate his honesty and humility.

Bishop Joseph Fiorenza of Houston has also just about had it. He wrote, "Hines wondered how long it will take for the Catholic Church to apologize for John Paul not responding to the Syrian leader for defaming Jews and Israel. I wonder how long it will take Hines and the *Chronicle* to apologize for the defamation of Pope John Paul II, a great servant of peace and the strongest moral voice in the world."

Jewish Week, published in New York, obtained a letter sent to Mr. Foxman by Walter Cardinal Kasper, the new head of the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. "To defame the Holy Father by attributing 'silence' to him is quite unjust and cannot go uncontested," the Cardinal wrote. "I must make clear that such an offensive intervention does nothing to serve your desire for a good and effective relationship with the Catholic Church. It wounds our relationship." One veteran of the Catholic-Jewish dialogue said that it was the "toughest" message from the Vatican in thirty years. In a response to Kasper, Foxman said, "It was in the context of the Pope's accomplishments that we were so distressed by the Vatican's lack of comment. Indeed as of this writing the Vatican has not addressed this matter." The ADL's patience is wearing thin.

Foxman's ADL ad in the *Times* declares in big type, "Pope John Paul II, we were greatly saddened by your silence." To which the proper response is, We are greatly saddened, and more than a little impatient, with your rudeness. Foxman, Hines, the *Jerusalem Post*, and too many others put one in mind of the words of Jesus in Luke chapter seven: "To what then shall I compare the men of this generation, and what are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another, 'We piped to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not weep.'" It is true that the Pope is *servus servorum Dei*, servant of the servants of God, but that does not mean that he is anybody's lackey. The partisan pipers who expect him to dance to their tunes will just have to get used to it. They'll no doubt keep acting as they do, at least for a while, since it apparently plays well with their hard-core constituency. But I expect it is the case that for most Americans, Jews and non-Jews alike, such misbehavior looks increasingly like that of petulant children in the marketplace throwing a tantrum because the world does not jump at their bidding. It is not entirely unlike the tantrum thrown by Assad in Damascus. Grown-ups will agree with Rabbi Lapin that it's time to calm down. Adult behavior may put a crimp in ADL's fundraising, but count that as a price well worth paying for the civility on which we all depend.

FT

BOBOS IN PARADISE, BUT MAYBE NOT FOR LONG

You may remember that I was at first sharply critical of David Brooks' argument in *Bobos in Paradise* (FT, August/September 2000). But his response (Correspondence, December 2000) prompted me to take a long second look. There is much more there than I thought, so our Ramsey Colloquium invited Brooks to a day-long discussion of his thesis. The thesis is that America's ruling class is composed of Bobos, meaning people who have successfully combined values bohemian and bourgeois. The further argument is that Bobos will remain the ruling class because they are able to co-opt challenges to their rule. In short, says Brooks, Bobos have resolved what many years ago Daniel Bell called "the cultural contradictions of capitalism." If true, that is an important development.

James Davison Hunter, the University of Virginia sociologist who has written very influentially about the culture war, was there, and he agreed with much of the Brooks thesis. Bobos, he suggested, live in a world very much like a high school where kids are divided into geeks, nerds, jocks, and so forth. Except that in this world the status differentiation is based almost exclusively on consumption. Bobos have lifestyles, he said, instead of lives ordered in obedience to perceived truth. Their serious commitments always come with an exit strategy attached. This fits Brooks' observation about the morality of Bobos, that theirs is "a house of obligation built on the foundation of choice." Hunter also agrees that, at least for the most part, the culture war is over for Bobos. It is kept going by organizations that are able to elicit support from 10 percent at either end of the cultural and ideological spectrum. As he puts it, "The middle has no mailing list."

Hunter and others pointed out that the Bobo world is more fragile than it appears, however. It is completely dependent upon economic prosperity and the lack of serious testing. Emerson was cited: "Adversity introduces a man to himself." Bobos are more than a little like Nietzsche's pitiful "last man" who goes on living the manners of morality after the moral bottom has fallen out. It can't last, and it won't. Others noted that Brooks' more recent writing about college students (see "The Organization Kids," *Atlantic Monthly*, April 2001) suggests that Bobodom may be a one-generation phenomenon. These students are uncritically committed to the disciplines of achievement. Put differently, they have quite abandoned the bohemian half of what it means to be a Bobo. Unlike their parents, they feel no obligation to maintain even the pretense of the rebelliousness of the sixties.

Meritocracy

Brooks says he is often asked whether Boboism is not largely a Jewish phenomenon, and he thinks there is something to that. When Harvard dropped its ethnic quota system in favor of meritocracy, Jews were first in line. Jews, he observes, have been on the cutting edge of meritocracy. This is not a subject discussed in his book, however, and others insisted that the Jewish factor should not be exaggerated. Although it is not generally appreciated, Catholics, especially Irish Catholics, are not that far behind Jews in having taken advantage of meritocracy. As for the old WASP establishment, some said it committed suicide, others that it had altruistically decided to share power, and yet others that it was happy to be assimilated to Bobodom. In any event, there was general agreement that *Bobos in Paradise* accurately describes what looks very much like a new ruling class.

It was altogether a rewarding discussion. I have always found great merit, however, in the opinion that American society is so vast and so various that almost any generalization made about it is amply supported by the evidence. And here things move so quickly that, just as you get a concept that seems to capture the cultural moment, it is made obsolete by change, usually unexpected change. And so it may turn out to be with the Bobo thesis. I was therefore most particularly interested when participants turned to the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

question of what we know for sure is different now from, say, fifty years ago. The resulting list is not exhaustive, and things are not necessarily listed in order of importance, but here are some changes that it seems we know for sure. Of course, some items are pretty obvious, but I think it is a useful list. You can add or delete at will.

1) The pervasiveness of fertility control (e.g., contraception and abortion), resulting in people having fewer children.

2) Meritocracy in the university and other avenues to achievement and reward.

3) The obsession with safety, especially the safety of children. Childhood freedom is replaced by regimentation.

4) Child-rearing based on the moral imperative of achievement. Thus parents jockeying to get their three-year-old into the "best schools," from day care through graduate school.

5) The increase many times over of kids going to college. A young person with only a high school education is simply out of the loop of achievement and reward.

6) The movement toward having "designer children" through new reproductive techniques.

7) The pervasiveness of pharmaceutical relief from life's anxieties—i.e., Prozac et al.

8) The creation of a "mass upper class." There are today, it is reported, more than thirteen million Americans who are millionaires.

9) Mass market spirituality. Consult the "spirituality" section of any chain bookstore. Religious identity is not inherited but elected. (Some dissented on this one, arguing that America has always been a spiritual and religious marketplace.)

10) The moralization of health. For instance, the anti-smoking campaign and obsession with exercise. Health displaces salvation. On New York buses, there is this ad for a gym: "Heaven and hell have the same address."

11) The extension of adolescence. The twenty-five-year-old at home or living on allowance is "finding himself." This connects with marrying later and having fewer children.

12) The nexus between "symbolic knowledge" and monetary reward. The route to success is not through making things but communicating things.

13) The absence of a hierarchy of value in literature and the arts. Art is rated by whether it is expressive or transgressive. And who reads poetry anymore? The "Western canon" is, for the most part, consigned to the dustbin.

14) The intellectual and cultural elite has made its peace with commerce, and then some. The anti-bourgeois tradition is displaced by getting rich.

15) The dramatic increase of women in the professions, with the resulting conflict between "having it all" and wanting children. (See above on marrying later.)

16) Selective mating, meaning that men choose women and women choose men of the same status. Bobos marry (or cohabit with) Bobos.

17) A public culture of biblical illiteracy. Related, in part, to the influence of secular Jews who have benefited from meritocracy, and are hostile to, or feel threatened by, biblical (meaning mainly Christian) referents in public.

18) The increase in, and moral imperative of, tolerance. Notably with respect to race, but extending to homosexuals and others previously censured as deviant.

19) Issues of morality and character replaced by the therapeutic. See Philip Rieff's prescient book, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic* (1966).

20) The polarization of the two major parties along religio-moral lines. As dramatically evident in the 2000 election, churchgoers vote Republican, non-churchgoers vote Democratic.

21) The uncritical acceptance by young people of authority figures—i.e., parents, teachers—who control the bestowal of grades, which means access to achievement. (There was dissent on this one; some saying it is not so much the case, others that it is not a change.)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

22) There is no widespread rebellion against "the system." Because that style was exhausted by the sixties, and, perhaps more important, because there is no big alternative system—e.g., Marxist socialism—being proposed today.

You may disagree with some items, but I think the list is suggestive. Keeping in mind that American society is so vast and various that almost any generalization is amply supported by the evidence. And you may want to explore for yourself what sparked this discussion, in which case I recommend David Brooks' *Bobos in Paradise.* It is, not incidentally, great fun to read.

FT

NEW YORK GLORY

New York University Press has now published a fine book of essays on religion in New York City by the above title, edited by Tony Carnes. Here are excerpts from my preface to the book, including, I expect, a warmed up chestnut or two.

When you're tired of London, the great Dr. Johnson observed, you're tired of life. More than two hundred years later, the same might be said of New York City. In fact, people have, in various ways, been saying essentially that about New York for more than two hundred years. In his fine introduction, editor Tony Carnes touches on the ways visitors to New York from Europe and elsewhere have intuited, to their satisfaction or alarm, that the city betokens the future of the modern (postmodern?) world.

Shortly after being appointed Archbishop of New York in 1984, John Cardinal O'Connor visited Pope John Paul II. The Pope greeted him with his arms spread and declared, "Welcome to the archbishop of the capital of the world!" This from the Bishop of Rome, the city to which, or so we are told, all roads lead.

New Yorkers are regularly reminded, and not always in the kindest tones, that New York is not America. They just as regularly, and happily, agree. One way in which New York is presumably not like the rest of America is that the rest of America is very religious while New York is determinedly secular. It is one of the great merits of the present book to challenge, sharply and convincingly, that assumption.

I have encountered sociologists who, with respect to America's religiosity and New York's secularity, speak of "New York exceptionalism." My own experience of living here more than thirty years, reinforced by the stories and data in these pages, suggests that we should view such a notion with robust skepticism. In general, secularization theorists have done something of a turnabout in recent years. In the more militantly secular versions of eighteenth-century Enlightenment and up through recent times, it was thought that secularization was something of an unstoppable juggernaut. As the world became more modern (i.e., enlightened), religion would either wither away or be hermetically sealed off from public life as a private eccentricity. Secularization theorists tended to be European and agreed with Max Weber that there appeared to be an unbreakable link between modernization and the "disenchantment" of the world. All is rationalized, specialized, bureaucratized, functionalized. In short, all is secularized.

Among those subscribing to this general theory, puzzlement was regularly expressed as to why religion, in maddeningly diverse ways, is so vibrantly alive in America, despite the fact that America is a modern, perhaps the most modern, society. The agreed-upon answer to this puzzlement was expressed in the notion of "American exceptionalism." Today there is a growing consensus that it may be more accurate to speak of European exceptionalism, or at least of Western European exceptionalism. While Germany, France, and the Netherlands, among others, seem to be in thrall to a numbing secularization, around the world—in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and elsewhere—there is a resurgence of religion, with all the cultural and political consequences that attend such a resurgence. This is the reality examined by Harvard's Samuel Huntington in his much controverted, but I think essentially accurate, "clash of civilizations" thesis. I am inclined to risk going a step further and say that, if the proverbial man or woman from Mars asked about the most important single thing happening on planet earth at the beginning of the twenty-first century, a very good answer might be the *de*secularization of world history. This is not, according to the textbooks still used from grade school through graduate school, how history was supposed to turn out.

A City of Many Cities

The present book suggests that the myth of New York exceptionalism is as dubious as is the myth of American exceptionalism. As America is, with respect to religion, more like than unlike the rest of the world, so New York is more like than unlike America. But, of course, New York is also different. The difference, however, may be quite the opposite of what is usually

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

supposed. The conventional wisdom for a long time was that the city is the preeminently modern expression of Weber's rationalized "disenchantment." It seems to me more likely, however, that the raucously variegated disjunctions of everyday life in New York open up spaces of enchantment—both wondrous and bizarre—unknown in more domesticated forms of human society. The city is a city of many cities, a world of many worlds.

My first parish assignment was to a medium-sized town of fifteen thousand people in far upstate New York. The life of that town was tight as a drum, predictable, rational, and in all its dimensions run by the rules of a family, a business, and an Episcopal church that had dominated it for generations. I and the small flock I shepherded were most decidedly outsiders. Then, still in my mid-twenties, I came to Brooklyn, New York, and plunged into the community activism that went with being pastor of a poor black parish in those days. Within months, I was leading demonstrations, testifying before the City Council, meeting with the Mayor, and generally playing the part of a public person of importance in a way that would have been impossible in the upstate town of my first parish. A person of importance? It was partly true and partly a delusion, and the truth and the delusion were hard to separate. That is what is meant by saying that New York is a world of many worlds.

Everybody with a taste for it and a modicum of talent gets a chance to be important in New York. There are so many worlds in which to be important, or at least to feel important. It is the city of finance and business, of fashion and theater, of publishing and the arts, of hustling and fervent piety. This book is mainly about the last dimension of life in New York. Former Mayor Edward Koch frequently said that religion, and the Catholic Church in particular, is the glue that holds the city together. I don't know if that is the most apt image, but for many, if not most, New Yorkers, religion defines a place to be, a piece of the whole from which it is possible to view the whole through the eyes of enchantment. As the late Christopher Lasch wrote of the family as a refuge in a heartless world, so it is possible to view the religious communities described in these pages as such refuges. For many members of these communities, they may be that. Yet it is the case, I expect, that for many others religion provides the story line by which to make sense of, and to make livable, the whole.

I have sometimes suggested, less than half-jokingly, that over the heavenly gates will be a sign: "From the Wonderful People Who Brought You New York City, the New Jerusalem!" I add that those who in this life did not like New York City will have another place to go. I say that less than half-jokingly, but not very much less.

The Church You Mean . . .

The editor notes, correctly, that Roman Catholicism in New York is very much slighted in the accounts provided here. I share his puzzlement as to why that should be. After all, somewhere around 44 percent of all the people in New York claim to be Catholic, and it is a Catholicism of stunning variety. I am told that in New York the Mass is said every week in thirty-two different languages. (Some say it is thirty-nine different languages, but I think they are counting somewhat similar Chinese dialects.) So the dearth of research on Catholicism is hardly due to lack of "color" or variety. And in many ways the presence of Catholicism in the city is religiously overwhelming. As comedian Mort Sahl said back in the 1950s, "The Catholic Church is the church you mean when you say 'the Church.'" In terms of public presence, no religious figure is in the same league as the Cardinal Archbishop. When gay activists decide to protest what they view as religion's oppressive ways, the demonstration is, of course, at St. Patrick's.

It is not as though the media, theater, and entertainment worlds based in New York ignore Catholicism. On the contrary, at any given time there are half a dozen or more plays deploring the allegedly terrible things done to pupils by Sister Immaculata in parochial school, and sitcom and talk-show jibes about Catholic guilt (usually sexual) are a staple. Yet academics in history and the social sciences seem to be paying little attention to the reality of Catholicism in New York. Perhaps it is like the elephant in the living room. Everybody knows it is there and has rather definite views about it, but there seems to be little to be done about it except to ignore it in the hope that it will go away.

I do not have a satisfying answer to Tony Carnes' puzzlement about the lack of academic interest in Catholicism in New York. I do know that G. K. Chesterton was right when he said that Catholicism is ever so much larger from the inside than from the outside. There are such rich lodes to mine in research and writing. Based on my own experience in the Archdiocese and Brooklyn Diocese, I would love to see, to cite but one instance, a thorough examination of the Filipinos in New York. In the past half century, in parish after parish, the Filipinos have been a catalyst of change in charismatic renewal, catechesis, and the revival of popular eucharistic and other devotions. Then there are the many determinedly disciplined "renewal movements"—from Opus Dei and Focolare to the Neocatechumenal Way and the Legionaries of Christ. Who are all these people, mainly young people, who are bent upon evangelizing the capital of the world and thus, or so they believe, changing the world?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Suffice it to say that *New York Glory* should be viewed as a beginning. Religion in New York City is a subject as inexhaustible as the human story itself. And were a definitive account ever to be written, it would immediately need to be rewritten. When I came here as a young man, I was showing a friend from out of town around. Pointing to all the construction sites where buildings were being torn down and others erected or rehabilitated, I said in my innocence, "This is really going to be a beautiful city when they get it finished." But, of course, the finishing of New York City is an eschatological concept. Meanwhile, *New York Glory* provides overviews, assessments, and snapshots of a city on its way to the New Jerusalem.

FT

WHY CHRISTIANITY NEEDS JUDAISM

In these pages there is frequent reference to "the Judeo-Christian tradition." The phrase is much more than the jargon of interreligious politesse or a piece of what some call the American "civil religion." We speak of a Judeo-Christian *moral* tradition, not of a Judeo-Christian religion. Yet the moral tradition presupposes common beliefs about God, covenant, history, and final promise. Here too, morality and religion cannot be neatly separated. Nor can personal belief and public decision making.

Both Christianity and Judaism are emphatically public. They are not private "spiritualities," to use the term so prevalent in our day. They have to do with public revelations making public truth claims. The giving of the "Ten Words" at Sinai was a public event, visible to anyone who was there, and is recorded in the public texts of the Torah, open to the examination of anyone who can read them. Similarly public is the life and mission of Jesus, and the history of the Church, beginning with the giving of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, and all this is recorded in the New Testament. Moreover, Judaism and Christianity are public in that each is attached to a people—a determinate, countable, flesh-and-blood people through time. There is no Judaism apart from Jews, nor Christianity apart from Christians.

In this respect, Judaism and Christianity are dramatically different from the "mystery religions" and various gnostic cults of both the ancient world and our own times. Back in the 1960s, some liberal Christian theologians promoted what they called "secular Christianity," and it caused a stir at the time. Few understood what they were getting at, and the media soon lost interest. But there is an important sense in which both Christianity and Judaism—what some prefer to call simply "biblical religion"—are undeniably secular, which is closely connected to their being public in character. They have to do with the *saeculum*, with the present age, with the real world; they do not float above the world or apart from the world in a sphere called "religion" or "the spiritual." Nor can they be contained within religion as defined by—in the words of philosopher Alfred North Whitehead—what a man does with his solitude.

Christians, more than Jews, are prone to forgetting this. Jews must always cope with the stubbornly resistant fact of the existence of the Jewish people. Christians can and do forget the historical embodiment of Christianity. This forgetfulness is the subject of Harold Bloom's 1992 essay, *American Religion*, an exaggerated but instructive description of Christian America as Emersonian Gnosticism. Christians forget who they are, and forget what Christianity is, when they forget Jews and Judaism.

Christianity is Jewish. Not simply as a matter of historical accident or ancient origins, but as a matter of its constituting beliefs and continuing existence. In the early twentieth century, the great Franz Rosenzweig, who struggled with becoming Christian before his reconversion to Judaism, went so far as to call Christianity "Judaism for the Gentiles." This should not sound strange to Christians who have attended to St. Paul's reflections on the relationship between Jew and Christian. The earliest Christians were Jews, while other Jews rejected Jesus as the promised Messiah. That rejection does not mean that God has broken His covenant with Abraham and his descendants. That covenant and that people remain "the root," to which the Gentiles are now joined. Paul writes to the Gentile Christians in Rome: "But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, a wild olive shoot, were grafted in their place to share the richness of the olive tree, do not boast over the branches. If you do boast, remember it is not you that support the root, but the root that supports you" (Romans 11).

A critical figure in Jewish-Christian relations is Marcion, who died in A.D. 160. Although he was condemned by the Church as a heretic, many Christians of the second century nonetheless rallied to Marcion's teaching that Christianity is not only separated from but is antithetical to the root of Israel. The God of the Old Testament, Marcion said, was the Creator God or Demiurge who is the very antithesis of the God whom Jesus called Father. The Creator God is the God of Law; the Christian God is the God of Love. The God of the Old Testament, the Demiurge, was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

contradictory, fickle, capricious, despotic, and cruel. The Supreme God of Love was revealed in Jesus in order to overthrow the rule of the Demiurge. In condemning Marcion, in embracing the Hebrew Scriptures as part of the Christian Bible, in affirming the unbreakable continuity with Judaism, the Church made the single most critical decision in defining the relationship between Christians and Jews. It is a decision determinative of our relationship in the twenty-first century, and until the end of time.

Yet it must be admitted that, for many Christians, Marcionism is by no means dead. I do not mean that Christians today subscribe to the doctrines taught by Marcion, although among some fringe groups there are possibly some who do. But in what is viewed as the mainstream of Christianity, also in America today, there is what we might call an operative Marcionism in which it is assumed that Christianity and Judaism are two different religions that have little or nothing to do with one another. It is Marcionism without the animus, or at least usually without the animus. In this view, the People of Israel lived back in the olden days of the Old Testament, and the fact that there are still Jews in the world is little more than a curious anomaly.

For such Christians, the reality of Living Judaism simply makes no religious sense. This does not mean they are anti-Jewish, never mind that they are guilty of what in the modern world came to be called anti-Semitism. As hard as it is for some of us who live in New York to believe, many, perhaps even most, Americans do not personally know any Jews. Jews are a little over 2 percent of the population and heavily concentrated in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Miami, and a few other urban centers. For Christian America, by and large, Jews are a people apart. For the majority of Americans, Jews and Judaism are perceived at a distance—in the distant past of the Old Testament, and on the distant commanding heights of contemporary culture.

Note also that in the modern era the Marcionite divorce of Christianity and Judaism has been championed by leading lights of the liberal theological tradition in Protestantism. The great German church historian Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930) considered it the great achievement of the Apostle Paul that he "delivered the Christian religion from Judaism." According to Harnack, Christianity, unlike Judaism, has to do not with corporate salvation but with the individual soul. "Anyone who wants to know what the kingdom of God and the coming of this kingdom mean in Jesus' preaching," Harnack writes, "must read and meditate on the parables. There he will learn what the kingdom is all about. The kingdom of God comes by coming to *individuals*, making entrance into their *souls*, and being grasped by them. . . . Everything externally dramatic, all public historical meaning vanishes here; all external hope for the future fades also. [It is] a matter of God and the soul, of the soul and its God."

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), the acknowledged father of modern theological liberalism, did not go so far as Immanuel Kant, who denied that Judaism has the dignity of being a religion at all, but he was sure that it was a religion of a decidedly inferior sort. Christianity's connections to "Mosaic institutions," Schleiermacher asserted, are purely historical and accidental: "As far as concerns its historical existence and its aim, Christianity's relation to Judaism and Heathenism are the same." The Christian theologian, he said, may safely ignore the Old Testament, which is to be "utterly discarded" since it is no more than the "husk or wrapping," and since "whatever is most definitely Jewish has least value." The "essence" of Christianity is for Schleiermacher, Harnack, and many contemporary thinkers something that must be liberated from a particular history and a particular people. Schleiermacher defined authentic religion as a "modification of feeling" or a "taste for the Infinite," which, like Harnack's religion of "the soul and its God," is strikingly similar to Harold Bloom's celebration of Gnosticism as the archetypically "American religion."

It is a safe bet that whenever religious thinkers start talking about the "essence of Christianity" they will end up by divorcing it from the stubbornly historical reality that is Christianity, and by pitting it, implicitly or explicitly, against the stubbornly historical reality that is Judaism. Many Jews are more comfortable with the tolerance that they associate with liberal rather than conservative Christianity. That is, both logic and historical experience suggest, a grave mistake. Christianity that is liberated from the normative story of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Jesus, and the Christian people through time is no friend of Jews or Judaism.

FT

WHILE WE'RE AT IT

■ Please join us in welcoming Damon Linker as the new Associate Editor of this journal. He replaces Daniel Moloney, who has been a splendid colleague and has made invaluable contributions over the last several years, but now intends to finish his doctoral dissertation at the University of Notre Dame. He is writing on Anselm of Canterbury's theory of justice,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and we look forward to his definitive clarification of that much misunderstood subject. After studying at Ithaca College in upstate New York and New York University, Damon Linker received his Ph.D. in political science from Michigan State University in 1998. He has taught at Michigan State and Brigham Young University, and was most recently a speechwriter for Mayor Rudolph Giuliani of New York. He has published extensively in, inter alia, *Commentary*, *Policy Review*, the *Review of Politics*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. He and his wife Beth, née O'Donnell, met at Ithaca College and she is currently a Ph.D. student in the history of medicine and science at Yale University. Damon was received into full communion with the Catholic Church at this year's Easter Vigil. We are grateful that he has accepted this position and look forward to a long, congenial, and productive collaboration. As for Dan Moloney, we have secured his firm promise that he will continue to provide us with his good counsel and written contributions to these pages. If I may be permitted a personal word: One of the joys of this enterprise is that, from the beginning, we have been blessed with a staff of remarkable energy, reliability, and spirited cooperativeness. The commitment of talented young people, such as Dan, Damon, and our Managing Editor, Alicia Mosier, bodes well for the future of this work, and for that I am very grateful indeed. I am also grateful, of course, for talented old people, such as Editor Jim Nuechterlein.

■ It appears that Dinesh D'Souza is striking out with his latest book, *The Virtue of Prosperity: Finding Values in an Age of Techno-Affluence* (Free Press), and he is getting very little help from his conservative friends. The techno-affluent society is producing a new kind of human being, says D'Souza. There are those who are unhappy about that, "the party of Nah," and those who think it's just great, "the party of Yeah." D'Souza definitely belongs to the second party. Reviewing the book in the *Public Interest*, David Skinner notes that D'Souza puts his Yeah vs. Nah concept to work on all kinds of questions: "It becomes another way of distinguishing ancient versus modern political philosophy, with the Greeks in the Party of Nah and Francis Bacon, John Locke, and the American Founders in the Party of Yeah. The Yeah people get to claim credit for building the United States of America and the Nah people end up on the losing side of slavery, poverty, disease, and various other assaults on human dignity. So, don't complain about your word-processing software unless you're ready to take blame for the Crusades. One is reminded of Virginia Postrel's book, which crudely divided the world between 'the future and its enemies.'" D'Souza does have a measure of respect for the continuing relevance of the Nahs. Skinner writes: "When the discussion finally turns to the question of posthuman man, D'Souza pays respect to Leon Kass' great contributions to the bioethics debate. But while recognizing such Party of Nah views, D'Souza makes clear that he believes many of the changes technology offers—designer children, increased life span, brain implants—are simply inevitable. Which leaves the Party of Nah on the wrong side of history. But wait, D'Souza believes these 'whiners,' as he calls them, will still have a job to do in the future. With thinkers like Plato and Aristotle on their side, the Party of Nah can 'supply us with personal horizons of understanding and significance.' Put another way, they can help everyone 'find values in an age of techno-affluence'—something D'Souza himself promises in his subtitle, but only halfheartedly pursues in this book." I'm not sure that Skinner and others have been entirely fair to the book. In conversation with D'Souza, who is a very bright and affable fellow, I am impressed with his idea that revivals of virtue have usually been spurred by want, whereas we now may be witnessing a revival of virtue spurred by prosperity. I am by no means convinced, but it is an interesting idea worthy of more careful development in another book, on which Dinesh D'Souza may be working even as I write.

■ I would not be surprised were a reader or two surprised by the generally favorable reflection on R. J. Rushdoony in this issue. After all, the editors have left no one in doubt about their belief that his movement to reconstitute society on the basis of "Bible law" is fundamentally wrongheaded. See, for but one instance, my article "Why Wait for the Kingdom? The Theonomist Temptation" (May 1990). In an obituary, however, the maxim comes into play, *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*. And Rushdoony undoubtedly warrants an obituary in a journal devoted to religion and public life. Far beyond the relatively small circle of those familiar with his name or movement, Rushdoony's peculiar brand of Calvinism has influenced the ways in which countless Americans think about God's will and the public order. We disagreed with him, as we disagree with those who simply dismiss him as a kook. Aspects of his thought, for better and for worse, are not entirely alien to the experience of the American founding and continue to play a part in how people try to make connections between revealed truth and the tasks of culture, law, and politics. Whatever our disagreements, it cannot be denied that he, too, was working on "first things."

■ The more refined exit polls on election 2000 are now in and the numbers crunchers are busily

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dissecting them in order to find out what *really* happened. Columnist and political analyst Mark Shields revisits the answers to the question, "Which issues, if any, were most important to you in deciding how you would vote for President today?" The number one answer (35 percent) was "moral and ethical values." Close to 15 percent said abortion was their top issue. That, of course, includes both pro-lifers and pro-choicers, but among those for whom abortion mattered most, 58 percent voted for Bush and 41 percent for Gore. Shields writes, "Simply put, that translates into a Bush advantage on the abortion issue of 2.5 million votes in an election that Gore won nationally by more than 540,000 votes." As Shields notes, the elite media consistently claim that being pro-life is an electoral handicap and urge the Republican Party to be a "big tent" that welcomes those who support the unlimited abortion license. "The nation's leading and most influential editorial pages," writes Shields, "almost never urge the Democratic leadership and nominee to welcome pro-life Democrats into their platform or onto their program." But you knew that.

■ In your examination of conscience you might want to add the sin of "transphobia." That's the transgression of not approving of people who try to surgically change their sex. "The Transgender Revolution" is the latest political cause being promoted by those of heightened consciousness. Columnist John Leo notes that San Francisco now pays for city employees who want sex-change operations, and a number of television shows are in the works portraying the joys of transgendered liberation. The *Los Angeles Times* had a sympathetic story on a husband and wife who are both having the operation. They will stay married, but the husband will become the wife and vice versa. Not everybody is supportive of the cause. Dr. Paul McHugh, director of psychiatry at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and a FT contributor, compares a patient's feeling that he is a woman trapped in a man's body with an anorectic woman's feeling that she is drastically overweight. "We don't do liposuction on anorectics. Why amputate the genitals of these poor men? Surely the fault is in the mind, not the member." McHugh stopped sex-change operations at Hopkins in the 1970s, calling them "perhaps with the exception of frontal lobotomy, the most radical therapy ever encouraged by twentieth-century psychiatrists." Others make the comparison with apotemnophilia, a psychiatric condition in which people think their limbs don't really belong to them. Last year a surgeon in Scotland drew publicity when he amputated the healthy legs of two patients. University of Minnesota bioethicist Carl Elliott suggests that unpredictable pathologies arise in certain societies at certain times "seemingly out of nowhere," and then disappear just as suddenly. Leo writes: "In nineteenth-century France, young men commonly lapsed into a 'fugue state,' often coming to in a foreign country with no idea of how they got there. In the 1970s and 1980s, thousands of Americans came to believe they had multiple personalities as a result of childhood trauma. Fifty years ago, Elliott says, nobody suspected that tens of thousands of people would want to have their genitals surgically altered as a way of relieving suffering. He thinks transgender activism and many social cues may have resulted in a temporary boom for sex-change surgery. It's a tentative analysis, and maybe he's wrong. But at least he is pushing the discussion back into the right arena—psychiatry and medicine, not politics." As for your examination of conscience, forget about the sin of "transphobia." You undoubtedly have a enough to worry about as it is.

■ Younger readers cannot remember, and many can hardly conceive of, a time when people were ostracized from the best circles of America for being anti-Communist. In the universities and media, anti-anticommunism was regnant, with some claiming that Communists were merely idealistic "liberals in a hurry," while most predicted a peaceful "convergence" between Western democracy and "Soviet-style socialism," and almost all agreed that the highest goal was "coexistence" with a reality that was deemed to be an unremovable fact of history. On the world-historical stage, there were a few leaders wise and bold enough to dissent from that orthodoxy: most notably John Paul II, Ronald Reagan, and Margaret Thatcher. But there were many others less well known, but crucially important to the ending of the greatest tyranny the world has known. Michael Bourdeaux, for instance, the founder of Keston College, which for many years, with tireless determination and careful scholarship, tracked the innumerable victims of Communist oppression. Bourdeaux, now retired from Keston, writes an obituary for yet another, Richard Wurmbrand, who died this year at age ninety-one. In America almost all right-thinking, meaning left-thinking, people viewed Wurmbrand as a nut, but Bourdeaux pays tribute to his heroism. Born in Romania in 1909, Wurmbrand became a Lutheran pastor and, for his outspokenness, was imprisoned both by the Fascist Romanian regime and, later, by the Communists. In 1965, for a ransom of $10,000, Romania let him and his wife Sabina go. Bourdeaux writes that the deal was the worst that the Communists ever made. "Ten billion dollars would have been a cheap ransom for a man who opened up the first hairline cracks in the Communist domination of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

international Christian agenda, cracks which would expand into fissures in the 1980s and become a contributory factor to the eventual collapse of the Soviet system itself." With relentless energy and great rhetorical skills, Wurmbrand charged institutions such as the World Council of Churches with being apologists for communism. At a U.S. Senate committee hearing he famously (notoriously, most thought) took off his shirt to display the marks of torture from his prison years. Bourdeaux writes: "He could and did make enormous mistakes, but his fourteen years of solitary confinement in a Communist prison and the appalling treatment both he and his wife received conferred on him the right—indeed the duty—to speak out with emotion once he was free. For several years after his release he became perhaps the most imposing orator on the Christian world stage." Like countless martyrs before him, his spirit was honed by persecution. "In his isolation and in the intervals between sessions of torture, Wurmbrand preached himself *Sermons in Solitary Confinement*, which was to become the title of his finest book (1969). His torturers promised him liberty and elevation to church leadership if he would travel and persuade international church agencies to adopt a pro-Communist agenda. They had picked the wrong man." Bourdeaux concludes: "But the final decade of Wurmbrand's life was a happy one. He and Sabina visited Romania to a heroic welcome and to appear on television. Most remarkably of all, they visited Richard's former prison, to find there a repository for his books." Against the vulgar determinists who now say that communism collapsed of its own weight, it is necessary to remember the part played by those who bore witness to the truth by which, then and now, we are made free. Richard Wurmbrand. *Requiescat in pace.*

■ "Do Poles, along with Germans, bear guilt for the Holocaust? It is hard to imagine a more absurd claim." So writes Adam Michnik, a Jew and editor of Poland's largest daily, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, in the *New York Times*. "Not a single Polish family was spared by Hitler and Stalin. The two totalitarian dictatorships obliterated three million Poles and three million Polish citizens classified as Jews by the Nazis." Of course some Poles did terrible things. He cites this from a letter written about a wartime incident on a Warsaw bridge: "Another time, on the Kierbedz bridge, a German saw a Pole giving alms to a starving Jewish urchin. He pounced and ordered the Pole to throw the child into the river or else he would be shot along with the young beggar. 'There is nothing you can do to help him. I will kill him anyway; he is not allowed to be here. You can go free, if you drown him, or I will kill you, too. Drown him or die. I will count . . .1, 2—' The Pole could not take it. He broke down and threw the child over the rail into the river. The German gave him a pat on the shoulder. '*Braver Kerl.*' They went their separate ways. Two days later, the Pole hanged himself." Michnik does not deny the anti-Semitism in Polish culture. "The anti-Semitic tradition compels the Poles to perceive the Jews as aliens while the Polish heroic tradition compels them to save them." And many thousands did engage in heroic actions to save Jews, even at the risk of their own lives and the lives of their families, during the time of Hitler. "I feel guilty," he writes, "when I read so often in Polish and foreign newspapers about the murderers who killed Jews, and note the deep silence about those who rescued Jews. Do the murderers deserve more recognition than the righteous?"

■ The largest group of Christians in the Middle East are the Copts of Egypt, and they are the object of relentless persecution by militant Muslims, with little or no response from the Mubarak government. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom is taking a heightened interest in what is happening there, and Freedom House has published a 130-page meticulously documented book, *Massacre at the Millennium*, on one aspect of the persecution, the murder of twenty-one Christians in Al-Kosheh. For more information, write Freedom House at Center for Religious Freedom, 1319 18th Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20036.

■ As has been frequently pointed out, the right to die almost inevitably morphs into the obligation to die. The Oregon Health Division (OHD) reports that in the third year of that state's euthanasia law 63 percent of those who sought and received physician-assisted suicide gave as their reason that they feared being a burden to family, friends, and other caregivers. That compares with 23 percent in the second year. In 1999 37 percent were referred for psychiatric evaluation before being euthanized, compared with 19 percent in 2000. The process is also speeding up. It was on average eighty-three days from first request to killing in 1999, compared with a much more efficient thirty days last year. Our Gilbert Meilaender might suggest that it is the family and friends who need to be referred for evaluation. See his "I Want to Burden My Loved Ones" (October 1991), also included in *The Eternal Pity* (University of Notre Dame Press), edited by Richard John Neuhaus.

■ "The Pure American Woman and the Wicked Catholic Priest." That's a snappy title for Marie Anne Pagliarini's article in *Religion and American Culture* on one aspect of anti-Catholic propaganda in antebellum

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

America. Most people know about Maria Monk's *Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery*, written by a group of men headed by J. J. Slocum and published in 1836. But that was only one of some 270 books, twenty-five newspapers, thirteen magazines, and innumerable tracts serving the anti-Catholic market between 1830 and 1860. They all specialized in lurid and frequently pornographic depictions of what Catholic priests allegedly do with women, and with nuns in particular—including seduction, rape, torture, and the killing of unwanted children. Dr. Pagliarini's article breathes outrage, which is understandable, but the object of her outrage is not the slander against the Catholic Church but the patriarchal Protestant bigots who were exploiting and thereby reinforcing the stereotype of women as pure, innocent, and "passionless." Such bigotry, she writes, is an instance of "gender roles" employed in what the polymorphously and suicidally perverse Michel Foucault called "bio-power." A reader might almost draw the conclusion that Dr. Pagliarini would be happier if the priests had been guilty of doing what their enemies accused them of doing, thus constituting themselves as the "transgressive vanguard" of her and M. Foucault's campaign against oppressive gender roles.

■ Not at all fictional, unfortunately, is the pattern of priests raping and otherwise abusing nuns that has been reported to the Vatican. This is happening mainly in Africa, where it seems almost everything is breaking down. Especially heartbreaking in recent years has been the massacre of hundreds of thousands in Burundi and Rwanda, carried out by people who are overwhelmingly Christian, mainly Catholic. In other countries, such as South Africa, a quarter of the adult population is infected by AIDS, and in some the epidemic is reducing life expectancy by as much as twenty years. Massive dislocation is caused by the fact that men must find employment in urban centers far from their wives and children, and therefore from the traditional tribal regulations of sexual relationships, including old-fashioned polygamy. And now it seems the Church is caught up in these commotions even as it seeks to counter them. Nuns are particularly vulnerable, says an observer, because they are not claimed by a man and African customs make it almost impossible for an adolescent or young woman to oppose a man who is older or in a position of authority. Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls says the problem is receiving urgent priority, and bishops are working with heads of religious orders both to address particular cases of abuse and to restore discipline among the clergy. I have a long-standing interest in Africa and have traveled extensively there. Recently an African bishop visited, urging me that we should report also on the many positive things happening there. He spoke movingly about the vitality of the people's faith under calamitous conditions, and I am sure he is right about that. But perhaps one may be forgiven, at least for the moment, for being overwhelmed by the calamity. To think of Africa is to weep. Better, to pray.

■ Slight attention has been paid the artistic value of the golden calf that Moses smashed, burned, ground into powder, and then poured into the water that he made the Israelites drink. Until the Taliban rulers of Afghanistan started blowing them up, slight attention, even by art historians, had been paid the Buddhist statues in that faraway country. But all of a sudden the world was in a mode of high moral dudgeon over this unspeakable sacrilege. Crispin Sartwell, author of *The Art of Living: Aesthetics of the Ordinary in World Spiritual Traditions*, is bemused by our ignorance of the strength of iconoclasm in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic history. He holds no brief for what the Taliban did, but he thinks there is something deeper at work. "But the idolaters that the Taliban are attacking are not the worshipers of the Golden Calf or even of the Buddha. Buddhism has been dead in Afghanistan for a thousand years. The idols they're obliterating are ours. We of the secular West have to some degree replaced religion with art. Art for us is something holy that must be preserved: housed in fortress-like buildings to which we make pilgrimages, preserved or restored in perpetuity. Art has not always been thought of that way by other cultures. Navajo sand paintings, as beautiful and difficult to make as they are, are traditionally destroyed after the ceremonies for which they are made. Art for us is spiritual, eternal, transcendent. We have made of art a cult, and the work of art is our idol. So the iconoclasts of the modern era horrify us as much as the iconoclasts of the ancient world horrified the pagans. It has seemed at times in the past few days that we are moved more by the plight of the sculptures of Afghanistan than the plight of the Afghan people, who are suffering from a drought and from the oppression of the Taliban rulers themselves. But the Taliban know very well how to horrify us: they know our religion, and they know their own. They're both enacting a central feature of theirs, and achieving maximum provocation by assaulting ours. This leads to the sad destruction of beautiful things. But it also testifies to the continuing power of images and the continuing power of the great religious traditions."

■ To be fair, an author is not responsible for what the people in the publisher's publicity department do. To be fair to the people in the publicity department, they

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

probably got their impressions from Father Hans Küng. Those who know Fr. Küng, your scribe included, know it is the impression he gives. The publicity for his little book in the Modern Library, a once prestigious series, describes Küng as "the primary author of Vatican II and one of the Christian world's great reforming voices." Elsewhere we are told that he "played the key role in the writing of Vatican II." The book is called *The Catholic Church: A Short History* and it concludes with Pope John XXIV and Vatican Council III, of which Hans Küng is undoubtedly the primary author. As you might expect, the Third Vatican Council makes explicit all the changes that for thirty years Küng has been arguing were implicit in the Second Vatican Council. If only in fiction, Fr. Küng got the story to turn out his way after all.

■ Randy Gordon, age seventeen. Bryan Zuckor, age fourteen. You never heard of them? You probably did, very briefly. But we have heard a great deal about Charles Andrew Williams, the schoolmate who killed them and wounded thirteen others in Santee, California. Media critic Dorothy Rabinowitz of the *Wall Street Journal* has been listening to all the chatter about what made young Williams "tick," and all the testimonials by friends and neighbors about what a very nice boy he is. Young killers like Williams, says Rabinowitz, have been given an "inner assurance" that people will understand, and that they will get a great deal of sympathetic publicity. What has been removed is "the most profound inhibition of all—namely, fear of what people would think, what friends, teachers, and authorities would say of them in the face of an act so unimaginable in its horror." Young Williams was apparently upset by school bullies who had been bothering him. States are now discussing anti-bullying programs for their schools. "Indeed," writes Rabinowitz, "a newcomer to this story who [listened to the media discussions] could easily have concluded that it was all about a terrible crime that had taken place in a California school—and that the victim was a youth called Charles Andrew Williams."

■ You may recall that a few years ago there was much media hype about a rash of burnings of black churches across the South. It turned out to be just that, hype. But the National Council of Churches and others raised about a million dollars for rebuilding churches that were not burned. The money was spent, of course, on "fighting racism." Now in Canada, the federal Multiculturalism Minister (yes, they have such an office), Hedy Fry, raised an alarm about racist cross-burnings. That, too, turned out to be fictional. But Lorne Gunter of the *Edmonton Journal* notes there really was an instance of cross-burning a year earlier in Montreal, when feminists stormed the Catholic cathedral on International Women's Day, an observance much encouraged by Multiculturalism Minister Fry. "The feminists, hiding behind ski masks, set alight homemade crosses, then stormed the cathedral. They vandalized the walls and altar with spray paint proclaiming No God, no masters. They knocked down elderly nuns, destroyed hymnals and prayer books, smeared the walls with used sanitary napkins, and strewed condoms around, all in the name of tolerance. It seems these protesters could not bear any views on abortion or women's rights that disagreed with their own. And since the Catholic Church believes all abortion is sin and chooses not to ordain women as priests, well then, its cathedrals were fair game for a good ransacking." You will probably not be surprised to learn that the Ministry of Multiculturalism had nothing, as in absolutely nothing, to say about what happened in Montreal.

■ Writing in *Commentary*, our new Associate Editor Damon Linker examines the claims of the animal rights movement as very influentially advanced by Steven Wise of Harvard and Peter Singer of Princeton. His conclusion: "It is a curious fact that in virtually all of human history, only in liberal democracies—societies founded on the recognition of the innate dignity of all members of the human race—have animals enjoyed certain minimum protections codified in our own country in the Animal Welfare Act. It is a no less curious fact that these same liberal democracies have become infected over the past decades with a corrosive self-doubt, giving rise in some educated circles to antiliberal, antiwhite, antimale, anti-Western, and now, with perfect logic, antihuman enthusiasms. The proponents of these various but linked ideologies march under a banner of justice and the promise of extending the blessings of equality to one or more excluded Others. Such piety is to be expected in a radical movement seeking well-meaning allies; but it need not deflect us from the main focus of their aggressive passions, which the euthanasia-endorsing Peter Singer, for one, has at least had the candor to admit to. Can anyone really doubt that, were the misanthropic agenda of the animal rights movement actually to succeed, the result would be an *increase* in man's inhumanity, to man and animal alike? In the end, fostering our age-old 'prejudice' in favor of human dignity may be the best thing we can do for animals, not to mention for ourselves." Along the way, he writes, "Until the day when a single animal

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stands up and, led by a love of justice and a sense of self-worth, insists that the world recognize and respect its dignity, all the philosophical gyrations of the activists will remain so much sophistry." Aside from the possibility that his reference to "stands up" may be a vestige of what the animal rights activists call "speciesism," Mr. Linker's argument is entirely on target. But then, you would expect that of someone who is our Associate Editor.

■ "God gets a bum rap in 'Soldiers in the Army of God,' an unnerving HBO documentary about the most radical segment of the anti-abortion movement," writes Julie Salamon in the *New York Times*. Her review leads one to believe that she was indeed unnerved by the program. "Their opposition to abortion is their business, but their righteous murderousness is repellent (and, of course, illegal)." She almost says that killing abortionists is wrong—a position frequently argued in these pages—but apparently does not wish to sound "righteous." It is sufficient to go on record that she is repelled by people killing other people. Or, as it is usually put these days, it is "inappropriate behavior." Reminding us that it is also illegal is a nice touch; the law is on the side of her feelings and against theirs. One notes parenthetically that it is a mark of our time that "righteous" and "self-righteous," which is what she meant to say, are thought to be interchangeable. Ms. Salamon goes on to write that, since the *Roe v. Wade* decision of 1973, seven abortionists and their helpers have been killed. She does not mention that approximately forty million unborn children have been killed. Since, as she notes, the people in the HBO film think abortion is murder, the ratio seems wildly disproportionate. In weighing the life of an unborn child against the life of an adult who kills unborn children, it might be argued that the adult life "counts" for more. Weighing the comparative value of human lives is a dubious business, but one may ask—purely for purposes of discussion, mind you—how many unborn lives it takes to equal the value of one adult life. Ten? In that case, the killing of four million people involved in or supportive of the killing of unborn children would seem to be proportionate. But perhaps there are those who would say that one adult life equals the value of, say, a thousand unborn babies, in which case forty thousand would achieve a form of symmetry. But forty million versus only seven? Little wonder that pro-abortionists frequently taunt pro-lifers, claiming that they can't really believe that abortion is murder. If they did, it is said, they would have long since blown up every abortuary and every abortionist in the country. It is indeed remarkable that there has been so little violence over these almost thirty years. But the "fanatics" depicted in the HBO film are beyond the pale. Ms. Salamon writes, "These are not rational people agreeing to disagree." She contrasts them unfavorably with the "clinicians and escorts at abortion clinics who keep doing their job despite the danger." The reasoning goes like this: "We kill babies, you object to killing babies, so let's be rational about this and agree to disagree as we get on with our job. Nobody is forcing you to kill babies. It's a dirty job, but somebody has to do it. You should be grateful that we're willing to do it. It's almost as though we're doing it for you." As I noted, Julie Salamon's review begins with God getting a bad rap. It ends on a happier note: "As if to restore God's credibility, the producers end the documentary in a Unitarian church at a memorial service for the two men murdered in front of the Pensacola clinic." That's the rational way to handle things. We agree to disagree, unless you disagree. As for Ms. Salamon's final "as if," one need only add that God's credibility was never in question.

■ *Sola scriptura* is the basis of democracy. That overstates somewhat the thesis of Benson Bobrick in *Wide as the Waters* (Simon & Schuster), which tells the story of Wycliffe, Tyndale, and others who gave the Bible in English to ordinarily believers. Writing in the *Wall Street Journal*, Marc Arkin says the book is a fine read but goes somewhat overboard. "This is the Whig view of history taken to the extreme—the story of a steadily triumphant, Anglocentric liberalism unfolding down to modern times, with the vernacular Bible leading the way. Thus Mr. Bobrick underplays the economic and political forces that contributed to the growth of parliamentary democracy in England, and to the literacy levels that made Bible reading possible. After all, Luther placed Scripture at the center of the faith and gave Germany a vernacular Bible well before England had one. Yet Germany did not attain a stable democracy until the latter half of the twentieth century. Vernacular Scripture may be a necessary condition for egalitarianism, but it certainly isn't sufficient. Even in communities where the English Bible held sway, the road to democracy was not smooth. In Massachusetts, where devotion to the Bible was once a requirement for the franchise, Quakers were last hanged on Boston Common in 1661; it was the autocratic Catholic sympathizer Charles II who ordered the executions stopped. Not until 1691 was toleration finally imposed on a reluctant Bay Colony by the mother country. Indeed, well after 1800, New Englanders still addressed their betters with their hats in their hands and church pews were assigned according to community status, with the wise and well-to-do placed nearest the Almighty."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Over 70,000 hits a day!

Click FIRST THINGS *first!*

www.firstthings.com

It's new . . . it's improved . . . it's easy to use for researching the best that's written or said about religious and cultural issues!

FIRST THINGS
Shakespeare's Millennium
FIRST THINGS
With John Paul II in the Holy Land
The Godlessness that Failed
FIRST THINGS
"The spiritual nerve center of the new conservatism."
— New York Times Magazine

Searching for the latest discussions of religion and public life?

Now you can get even more out of the online home of FIRST THINGS, the Journal of Religion and Public Life! Our redesigned website allows you to:

- ***Browse*** a huge assortment of past issues!
- ***Search*** past issues by author, key words, and even the full text using our cutting-edge search engine!
- ***Enjoy*** a collection of FIRST THINGS' finest essays arranged by topic!
- ***Engage others*** in fascinating online discussion groups, run by our readers!
- ***Stay informed*** by signing up for FIRST THINGS' new e-mail bulletin!
- ***Subscribe online*** using your credit card over our secure server!

Visit our redesigned website, First Things Online, today!

www.firstthings.com

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

■ The words of *Moby-Dick*, writes theoretical mathematician David Berlinsky, bring a world into being. But what brings *the* world into being? Scientists addressing such really big questions have in recent years been attached to a number of theories: chaos and nonlinear dynamics, catastrophe theory, game theory, evolutionary entropy, and various notions of complexity and self-organization. "The history of science," says Berlinsky, "resembles a collection of ghosts remembering that once they too were gods." Today, information theory is riding high. "Viewed at the most abstract level," says *New York Times* science writer George Johnson, "both brains and computers operate *the same way* by translating phenomena—sounds, images, and so forth—into a code that can be stored and manipulated" (emphasis added). After examining in detail the arguments being made for that proposition, Berlinsky writes: "We are thus returned to our original question: How do symbols—words, strings, DNA—bring a world into being? Apparently they just do." Current cosmology suggests that the universe began with a big bang, erupting from nothing whatsoever fifteen billion years ago. "Plainly, the creation of something from nothing cannot be explained in terms of the behavior of material objects. This circumstance has prompted some physicists to assign a causative role to the laws of physics *themselves*. The inference, indeed, is inescapable. For what else is there? 'It is hard to resist the impression,' writes the physicist Paul Davies, 'of something—some influence capable of transcending space-time and the confinements of relativistic causality—possessing an overview of the entire cosmos at the instant of its creation, and manipulating all the causally disconnected parts to go bang with almost exactly the same vigor at the same time.'" The laws of physics begin to sound something like a deity. They are, says philosopher Mary Hesse, "universal and eternal, comprehensive without exception (omnipotent), independent of knowledge (absolute), and encompassing all possible knowledge (omniscient)." Such scientific-philosophical thought, says Berlinsky, edges up to the very limits of the plausible. "A novel brings a world into creation; a complicated molecule an organism. But these are the low taverns of thought. It is only when information is assigned the power to bring something into existence from *nothing whatsoever* that its essentially magical nature is revealed. And contemplating magic on this scale prompts a final question. Just how did the information latent in the fundamental laws of physics unfold itself to become a world? Apparently it just did." One might be tempted to dismiss Berlinsky's ponderings as an instance of taking the very long way around to get to You Know Who, but the temptation should be resisted. For those who view faith as an alien imposition on reason, as well as for those who hold to a reasoned faith, it is always important to demonstrate again and again, even by long ways around, that all that is true is ordered to the truth.

■ Here's a fine dustup. The Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) is suing the new American Unitarian Association (AUA) for using the name Unitarian. AUA accuses UUA of abandoning "classical," "traditional," and "historic" Unitarianism. The AUA press release edges dangerously close to saying "orthodox." The release charges that "Unitarian-Universalism has fully embraced polytheistic religions that totally contradict the name Unitarian." Since it started as a protest against the Christian doctrine of the Trinity—the three Persons in one God—the AUA would seem to be on solid ground in claiming that Unitarianism is incompatible with belief in an open-ended number of gods and goddesses. But I confess that figuring out how an anti-credal tradition determines who is faithful to its creed is beyond my powers.

■ "It is absolutely shocking to see some of the people who have been chosen to help create federal policy on church-state partnership," declares Barry Lynn of Americans United for Separation of Church and State. His reference is to a largely honorary advisory committee appointed by the Republican congressional leadership. Lynn, ignoring the well-established rule of the homiletical suspension of rhetorical temperance, cites insensitive remarks about other groups made by black clergy on the committee. I mention this only because of my interest in contemplating Mr. Lynn—whose job, like that of Captain Renault in *Casablanca*, requires being routinely shocked—in a state of *absolute* shock. It is a terrifying prospect.

■ Yes, I am intensely interested in, but I hope not obsessed by, the reception of James Carroll's *Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews*. The other week at a Barnes & Noble book signing for *Death on a Friday Afternoon*, copies of Carroll's book were stacked six feet high at the entrance and the manager told me it is selling briskly. It seems likely that many minds and souls are being poisoned, for this is a deeply bad book. In addition to our own review by Thomas F. X. Noble (May), I have noted in this space critiques of Carroll's self-indulgent travesty of history and theology appearing in other publications. What is left to be said? I have not noticed elsewhere this observation by the distinguished historian John Lukacs: "Yes, during two thousand years there were,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and presumably there still are, Catholics who hate Jews and wish to have them killed. Laymen and laywomen but also priests and friars and preachers (though no popes). But in his very American and anti-authoritarian way, Carroll misses the focus of the danger wholly. The danger, not only to Jews but to the Church and faith itself, is not authoritarianism but populism. Here and there Carroll notices this without paying attention to it. The persecution of the Jews in Spain was a populist demand, to which the King and the Queen reluctantly agreed (though the Pope did not). Why was Hitler dangerous? Because he was both populist and popular." If Constantinianism means the Church compromising herself in accommodating the powers of the world, it takes a quite different form today, says Lukacs: "And now, when popular sovereignty is the dominant political configuration throughout the globe, the trouble is not that a cross stands on a hill at Auschwitz. It is that a pastor of a church where I attended Mass on the last Sunday of January in A.D. 2001 should have begun his sermon thus: 'Let me tell you now the story of the angels and saints in heaven as they are watching the Super Bowl.'"

■ Here's a double standard that may have escaped your attention. Columnist Terry Golway writes in the *New York Observer* that religious organizations are worrying out loud about the dangers of being corrupted if they accept government money for their social service programs. "This is not the kind of introspection one associates with some other beneficiaries of federal largesse, i.e., the artists, museums, and other cultural organizations whose consciences are untroubled by the flow of money from the National Endowment for the Arts and from the budgets of local governments. Rather than wring their hands about the possible corrupting influence of government money, a generation of artists has come to believe that publicly funded grants are an entitlement, and those who either oppose them outright or seek some kind of review process are nothing more than neo-Fascist shredders of the right to free expression. Faith-based organizations may torture themselves about the rules that accompany federal money; artists believe that rules simply don't apply to them. Free expression, don't you know? It's in the Constitution! Indeed it is—contained in the same amendment that guarantees religious freedom." Artists, Golway notes, plead the First Amendment when government (a.k.a. Rudy Giuliani) suggests that it has a right to withhold money from artistic exhibitions that taxpayers find offensive. "That's a valid and indeed honorable argument, so one might expect right-thinking artists to stand alongside their brothers and sisters in the First Amendment as the nation's religious organizations attempt to balance their right to religious belief with the acceptance of government money. One suspects, however, that the denizens of Dante's *Inferno* will be turning triple axles before the nation's artists will person the barricades on behalf of Pat Robertson's right to worship as he sees fit while taking federal money to minister to the poor. So some of the very same people who believe cultural organizations owe no obligation to public sensibilities when they take taxpayer funds are prepared to argue that religious organizations must abide by the government's political dictates if they take the government's money. If that infringes on religious belief—well, nobody is forcing these organizations to take tax dollars. Those who use a similar argument on matters artistic, of course, will find themselves condemned as censors."

■ Michael Joyce has retired as president of the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation in Milwaukee. It is not the kind of thing I would ordinarily mention here, except that he is a very dear friend and colleague, and except that you might not be reading this journal were it not for Mike Joyce. Bradley is by no means the largest foundation in the country (it ranks about seventieth), but under Mike Joyce's fifteen years of leadership it has probably been the most imaginatively constructive. Catalytic is the word. You can do a lot with a little, if you know what you're doing, as was demonstrated in working with Mike Joyce. Through subscriptions, advertising, and the generous support of readers—especially in response to the annual appeal—this journal manages to survive, but it and the other programs of the Institute on Religion and Public Life are also sustained by Mike Joyce and Bradley. By his strategic thinking and judicious funding, Mike has made a singular contribution to many good causes, notably to parental choice in education and opening opportunities for children in the inner city. His is the gratification of knowing that, many years from now, kids who might have been in jail will be productive citizens, in large part because of the good citizenship of Mike Joyce and Bradley. I don't know what Mike will do next (he is, from my perspective, a relatively young man), but I hope to be part of it.

■ My colleague Jim Nuechterlein wrote recently about the moral ambiguities that attend being identified as German ("Pride and Patriotism," May). Germans in Germany are sensitive about that, and it was a factor reportedly underscored by almost all Catholic and Lutheran bishops in their Easter

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sermons this year. The occasion was the Dutch decision to become the first nation to legislate a broad legalization of euthanasia. Karl Cardinal Lehmann, head of the Catholic bishops conference, declared that the Dutch action was a betrayal of the European moral and cultural tradition. "We are already in the midst of a culture of death," he said. Joachim Cardinal Meisner of Cologne asserted that only a "sick and psychologically degenerate" society could approve such a law. The Germans, of course, have powerful reasons to be alert to the violation of the fragile protocols of civilization. Their universities have denied a platform to Princeton's Peter Singer and his advocacy of infanticide, euthanasia, and eugenics, and strict limits are placed on what can be said in public about, for instance, the growing presence of Muslim immigrants in Europe. Free speech absolutists protest such limits, of course, but, in view of its history, one is inclined to cut Germany considerable slack on this score. As for euthanasia and related aspects of the culture of death, the poignant oddity of the Germans reproaching the Dutch is that, during the latter's occupation by the former in World War II, the Dutch had a sterling record of resisting the lethal policies of the Nazis. It is suggested that the Netherlands should be given to understand that it is fast turning itself into a pariah nation. To someone who is planning a vacation or meeting in Amsterdam, one might innocently ask the question, "They kill old, weak, and unhappy people, don't they?"

■ *Washington Post* columnist Richard Cohen says he has "qualms" about abortion, but he certainly doesn't want to be associated with people who advocate killing abortionists. James K. Fitzpatrick's article, "A Pro-Life Loss of Nerve?" (FT, December 2000), to which Cohen twice refers, is of course an argument *against* the use of violence in the pro-life cause. But what with two columns per week and other deadlines, Mr. Cohen's is undoubtedly a very busy life. And, after all, he gets paid for writing, not reading.

■ Oh, dear. The editors of *America*, the Jesuit weekly, are at it again, railing against the "inquisitorial methods" of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) and demanding that it "be dismantled without delay." "Father [Jacques] Dupuis joins a long list of eminent Catholic theologians who have been harassed by the congregation," the editors declare, and then go on to list precisely four others who have run into trouble with CDF during the entire twenty-three years of this pontificate. Actually there have been more than four, perhaps six or seven. But, according to the editors, "The congregation has gone full speed ahead with its investigations of theologians around the world." Moreover, *America* complains that when CDF has determined that the writings of a theologian may be dangerously erroneous, it notifies the author and his ecclesiastical superiors of its concern. "Since the media usually learn of the judgment, the author's reputation is stained," the editors say. If leaking to the media is the problem, it would seem to follow that there should be more secrecy rather than less in CDF procedures. Needless to say, the workings of CDF are not beyond criticism, but the fact is that it is typically the theologian in question who goes to the media. Hans Küng, for instance, has made a very good thing out of his difficulties with CDF many years ago when Rome still took him seriously. And then there was the former priest Matthew Fox, who took out a full-page ad in the *New York Times* with the headline, "I HAVE BEEN SILENCED!" The core wrongheadedness of the *America* editors is that they entirely ignore the uniqueness of the Church's responsibility to guard "the faith once delivered to the saints" (Jude 1:3). Their only criterion is what they call "modern notions of due process." They condemn CDF for referring to ideas as "erroneous" and "dangerous." "Only totalitarian states use such expressions," the editors harrumph. They're right about that, of course. Democratic states do not presume to judge erroneous and dangerous ideas, but what does that have to do with the Church? Vatican City is a tiny state, but Vatican City is not the Church. The Church is not a state, democratic or otherwise. There are, to be sure, political and legal dimensions of the life of the Church, but the constituting definition of the Church is theological, and it is theology that is entirely missing in *America*'s discussion. The editors speak as if they might be discussing due process with respect to policy disagreements in the Department of Health and Human Services. The Church is constituted by revealed truth, and, while truth is more than ideas, it is also inseparable from ideas. Certainly distinctions should be made. "There is a difference," the editors write, "between denying the faith and being in error on some minor issue. There is also a difference between being truly dangerous and being judged dangerous by some fearful people." The first statement is a truism, and the second is a most uncharitable—and, in my experience, grossly inaccurate—judgment of those who work in CDF, beginning with its prefect, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger. "Finally," says *America*, "no human court is immune to mistake. Appeals must be allowed." True, CDF may make mistakes, but to whom should a judgment be appealed? The editorial has already noted that the Pope approves CDF decisions (the implication is that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the Pope doesn't realize that he is being used by CDF), so it would seem that appeals cannot be directed to the Pope. Perhaps the appeal should be to the guild of academic theologians? Review by peers who are frequently partners in dissent is not likely to carry much credibility. There is the additional problem that the mandate and charism for authoritative teaching is given to Peter and the apostolic college, not to the academy. Going outside the community of theological discourse, dissenting theologians do appeal to *America* and, to the best of my recollection, are without exception found appealing and granted a favorable judgment. But, of course, the judgments of the editors of *America* are determinative of nothing, and there's the rub. The editorial, "Due Process in the Church," is argued in such strident and slapdash fashion that perhaps not too much should be made of it. Were one to take it more seriously than it deserves, however, it would not be inaccurate to say that it is, at least by implication, a denial of what the Catholic Church holds regarding the teaching authority, or Magisterium, of the Church. Perhaps to the disappointment of its authors, the editorial received little attention and, while clearly erroneous, did not rise to the status of dangerous in the judgment of CDF or anyone else. Maybe that is because CDF is too busy, what with its going "full speed ahead with its investigations of theologians around the world." Theologians first. The editors of *America* will just have to wait their turn.

■ *Publishers Weekly*, in a special issue covering LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered) books, says this niche market has been sliding since 1993, which was widely celebrated as the Year of the Gays, when "major publishers became intoxicated by an irrational exuberance for lesbian and gay titles." Will Schwalbe, the gay editorial director of Hyperion, says, "I just don't see gay men reading much or getting excited about books. In addition to movies, they're watching cable programs like *Queer as Folk* and TV shows like *Will and Grace*." Perhaps predictably, LGBT writers and publishers are turning to younger people. "The real new story," says David Rosen of InsightOutBooks, "is the emergence of what I call 'hijinks in high school' books dealing with sexuality in high school." *PW* comments: "This phenomenon is reflected in the fact that two mainstream houses are openly addressing the issue of same-sex teen experience in novels directed to an ages twelve-and-up readership." The youth of today are the market of tomorrow, and, for that matter, of today.

■ Uh-oh. The headline in the *Washington Post* reads, "Ashcroft's Faith Plays Visible Role at Justice." Visible, as distinct from invisible, faith is, it seems, doubtfully constitutional. The gist of the story is that the Attorney General begins the day with a brief Bible study session in his office. The session is open to anyone who wants to come, and attendance ranges from a dozen or so to as many as thirty. The reporter, Dan Eggen, called up the usual suspects and elicited their deep worries about Ashcroft violating the separation of church and state. There is no reference to President Thomas Jefferson having regularly attended Sunday services in the Senate chamber. The story does mention that President Bush also begins the day with Bible study, but he does so alone and therefore, presumably, without visible faith, or without his faith playing a visible role, or whatever. In addition to its many other responsibilities on behalf of the common good, the *Post* has assumed a heavy task in determining whether the faith of public officials has a role, visible or invisible, in how they do their jobs. This requires, I should think, the most careful examination and spiritual discernment. And, of course, one counts on the *Post* to take account of the variety of faiths and non-faiths involved. For instance, we might look forward to a story by Mr. Eggen with the headline, "Deputy Secretary's Secularism Plays Visible Role at State"—or Defense, or HHS, or wherever. The inquisitor's lot is not an easy one.

■ It is a major development in the public argument about homosexuality. The study presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychiatric Association (APA) is by Dr. Robert Spitzer, Chief of Biometrics Research and Professor of Psychiatry at Columbia University in New York. Dr. Spitzer describes himself as a secular humanist Jew and was the leading figure in the 1973 APA decision that removed homosexuality from the official diagnostic manual of mental disorders. "Like most psychiatrists, I thought that homosexual behavior could only be resisted, and that no one could really change their sexual orientation. I now believe that to be false. Some people can and do change," said Spitzer. The study included hundreds of men and women who have experienced a significant shift from homosexual to heterosexual attraction and have sustained the change for at least five years. Three-quarters of the men and half of the women are now married. Not surprisingly, the study has met with furious criticism from gay advocates. Dr. Spitzer's principled view is very simple: "I believe patients should have the right to explore their heterosexual potential." (For more information on the study and other pertinent research, write to the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality, 16633

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ventura Blvd., Suite 1340, Encino, California 91436, or visit www.narth.com.)

■ It is true that, from time to time, I have offered a barbed, even caustic, comment on what purports to be our newspaper of record. Then there are those moments when I am forced to wonder how those whose matinal routine does not include perusing the *Times* manage to get by. Here, for instance, is the headline of a major story: "School Bullying Is Common, Mostly by Boys, Study Finds." Sociologists of knowledge describe such moments as "Ah, ha!" experiences. Just when you're thinking of giving her up, the old painted lady once again demonstrates her indispensability.

■ Over lunch with a cardinal of the Roman curia, the discussion turned to perennially troubled relations with Orthodox Christians, Jews, and Muslims. "What you have to understand," the cardinal told me, "is that this Pope has no shame." By that he meant that it is not possible to shame the Pope into not trying again. You can revile him, rebuff him, and insult him, but he keeps coming back, holding out his hand in a relentless search for understanding and reconciliation. The Pope's determination was sorely tested again during his May pilgrimage to Greece. There some Orthodox clergy publicly invoked curses upon the "arch-heretic" and "two-horned grotesque monster of Rome" (referring to his bishop's miter). Christodoulos, the head of the Greek church, greeted him by reading a bill of indictment, listing centuries of Orthodox grievances against the West. In accord with his call for a "purification of memories," John Paul calmly responded with an acknowledgment of sins against Orthodoxy by Catholics, and prayed for God's forgiving and healing love. Some Catholics have given expression to an impatience that the Pope always manages to contain. Here, for instance, is Rod Dreher, writing in the *Wall Street Journal*: "Seizing the moment, he has not only asked forgiveness for the historical sins of Catholicism, but has also gone to astonishing lengths to accommodate the obstreperous Orthodox—even putting the nature of the papacy on the table for discussion. He has suffered repeated insult from Eastern churchmen—including a scandalous 1991 rebuke at a ceremony in St. Peter's Basilica—yet returned hatred with affection. To little avail, alas. If the fathomless humility and charitable witness of this great and good pontiff (great *because* he is good) bear fruit in the East, it will almost certainly not be in his lifetime. Word has not yet reached Mt. Athos that the new Babylon is not Rome but Hollywood and the shopping mall. (How's that for a two-horned monster?) But it will. By the time the Orthodox awaken from their self-satisfaction and grasp the true nature of the spiritual and moral crisis engulfing their respective cultures, what will they do to fight it? Perhaps they will consult *Veritatis Splendor* and *Evangelium Vitae*, as well as other prophetic writings of John Paul II, an authentic Christian humanist who truly grasped the promise and the peril of the postmodern world. Too late, it may dawn on the Orthodox religious authorities what kind of wise and holy man they, in their narrow-mindedness and pride, rejected out of hand. Tragic? Yes. But in the Gospels, you'll find precedent for this sort of thing." As it happened, Christodoulos seemed very much taken with John Paul's response to his bristling indictment, and even went so far as to join him in publicly praying the Our Father. That was no little step, since prayer with an "arch-heretic" is strictly forbidden. Moreover, Christodoulos seemed to suggest that he would use his influence to soften the hostility of the Moscow Patriarchate, perhaps making possible, at long last, a papal visit to Russia. Shamelessness, rightly understood, may be a virtue to be cultivated.

■ The new Progressive Religious Partnership, an organizational potpourri of radicalisms past and present, held its organizing conference in Washington. "Between the speeches and plenary discussions," reports the *Christian Century*, "conference participants broke into workshops on AIDS, the 2000 presidential election, missile defense, sweatshops, welfare, school vouchers, capital punishment, ecology, reproductive rights, and same-sex unions, among other topics." Said Rabbi Steven Jacobs of a Reform temple in Los Angeles, "We are not spraying bullets all over the place. . . . Sexual justice is part of the threat that runs through all of these issues and all are part of the progressive agenda for America." I don't know what that means; perhaps that missile defense, for instance, might trigger a nuclear conflict that could have devastating consequences for gay, lesbian, and transgendered persons.

■ In the May issue I ran a fictional letter to Dr. Laura Schlessinger, the popular giver of advice, in which the author joshed her for quoting the Bible in condemning homosexual acts as an "abomination." In a humorous vein, the author asked her how we ought to implement the death penalty for other capital offenses specified in Exodus and Leviticus. I said that the letter was a useful reminder that the case against same-sex relations cannot be made by cherry-picking Bible passages but requires a considered

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

understanding of human sexuality based on both natural law and revealed truth. Several readers tell me that I should have added that the tradition of rabbinical commentary on Torah contains clear and sophisticated distinctions in applying the proscriptions mentioned in the letter, and they are right. The item was directed at a style of "proof-texting" common among some Christians, and should not have been directed at Dr. Schlessinger, who is an observant Jew. For an example of the kind of considered statement by Jews and Christians that I was recommending, see the Ramsey Colloquium's "The Homosexual Movement" (FT, March 1994). As for the letter to Dr. Laura, the writer was trying to be too clever by half, and I should not have run it. Even Homer nods, and I'm no Homer.

■ President Bush seems to be meeting with everyone, so we should not be surprised that he got around to meeting with the bishops of his own United Methodist Church. There wasn't a mention of the meeting in the general media, so I thought you should know that the bishops rebuked Bush for his anti-missile defense system, insisted that the U.S. cease its "war games" in Korea, and reduce aid to Israel for its oppression of the Palestinians, among other things. They also promised to pray for the President. Mark Tooley, a United Methodist with the Institute on Religion and Democracy, says there are several reasons why nobody paid any mind to the meeting. First, reporters know that the bishops do not speak for United Methodists, who overwhelmingly vote Republican. Then there is the fact that United Methodists are so dull. Southern Baptists can be "entertaining when they want to be," and "Catholics are good at shows and ceremony," and Episcopalians are forever into "squabbles over sex," while "There are few things more middle American and therefore less exciting than a Methodist." (This is Tooley, please note, not me.) But the main problem, he suggests, is that the UM bishops are just so fatuously and incessantly dumb in their sanctimonious reiteration of leftist bromides. (That's my paraphrase of what I think he is suggesting.) But he's glad the bishops said that they're praying for the President. He recalls the Republican Senators who met with a gravely ill President Woodrow Wilson and assured him of their ardent petitions to heaven. "For which result are you praying?" Wilson asked.

■ Some kind of medal for doggedly persistent ideological commitment is owed British Columbia's College of Teachers, which certifies educational programs and teachers. Or doesn't, as the case may be. As, in fact, was the case with Trinity Western University, which asks students and teachers to sign a "community standards agreement" that precludes involvement in "premarital sex, adultery, and homosexual behavior." The school also asks students to refrain from cheating and stealing, so you can see what a nest of fanaticism Trinity Western is. But it was the homosexuality bit that pushed the buttons of the College of Teachers. Despite losing at every level, they pushed the case through the courts for six years. This spring the Supreme Court of Canada ruled 8-1 that there was no evidence that Trinity Western teachers had discriminated against or otherwise mistreated homosexual children. A great victory for religious freedom? Perhaps not. Critics claim that the ruling turns on the premise that religiously based moral conviction is not a problem if one keeps one's convictions to oneself. If a teacher had suggested in a classroom that there might be something wrong with premarital sex, never mind homogenital sex, the logic of the ruling would seem to require that the Court come down on the other side. Nonetheless, the 8-1 decision is to be welcomed. For the moment, it is legal in Canada to believe what almost all Christians have believed for two thousand years, as long as you keep it to yourself. Having said that, I should add that my friend Iain Benson, a distinguished lawyer with the Centre for Cultural Renewal, takes a much more hopeful view of the Court's decision, and of course I hope he is right.

■ What do you suppose the *New York Times* knows that the U.S. State Department, Freedom House, Human Rights Watch, the *Atlantic Monthly*, the *Baltimore Sun*, and others do not know? Here is a story by Jane Perlez claiming that Africa expert Chester Crocker wants assurances from Secretary Colin Powell that he will be shielded from political pressure by religious conservatives if he accepts the position of special envoy to deal with the atrocities in Sudan. Ms. Perlez writes: "The conflict has become a lightning rod for Christian advocates and for black lawmakers because of what they call the Sudan government's policy of allowing Christian black Sudanese to be abducted and sent into slavery in the Islamic north. Some church groups have financed 'redemption' missions, in which visiting Americans pay money to 'free' abductees." That snide and dismissive "they call" is interesting. In fact, the U.S. State Department official reports (also under President Clinton) and the above-named human rights groups and publications have all documented in detail that the Khartoum regime is engaged in slaving. Of at least equal interest is putting "free" in quotes. If there are slaves (and there are), and if they are being bought back from slavery (and they are), it

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

would follow that they are being freed. So what does the *Times* know that nobody else knows? Nothing. Except that it believes no opportunity should be missed to take a whack at the insidious influence of religious conservatives, especially when they succeed in roping in some gullible "black lawmakers." Imagine a story in the *Times* with this line: "Gay advocates are seeking 'protection' from what they call discrimination." Imagine away.

■ Abraham Brumberg was clearly not the person to review Jan T. Gross' best-selling *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland.* The accepted story for years was that the 1941 slaughter of 1,600 Jews in the town of Jedwabne was carried out by the Nazis. (Investigations now going on suggest that the number of people killed may be much less.) In his book Gross contends that, in fact, the anti-Semitic non-Jewish half of the town, freed to do so by the Nazi occupation, killed off the Jewish half, and did so with unspeakable brutality. Brumberg, writing in the *Times Literary Supplement*, goes farther, offering a sweeping indictment of inveterate Polish anti-Semitism and eager collaboration with the Nazis. That prompts Norman Davies, the distinguished British historian of modern Europe, to a spirited response: "On the wider aspects of collaboration, Brumberg does his best to associate wrong-doing exclusively with Poles. He does so by saying nothing about collaboration with the Soviets, who in 1939-41 were killing and deporting considerably more people than the Nazis were, and by harping on Polish police, Polish round-ups, and Polish Jew-haters. It is all done on the false assertion that it is somehow 'insensitive' to mention Jewish policemen, Jewish round-ups, Jewish informers, Jewish Pole-haters, Jewish kapos, or the Jewish Councils which administered the Nazi-built ghettos. The bias is blatant. The fundamental fact is that the totalitarian regimes could tempt or coerce members of any ethnic community to do their dirty work for them. We should take note of everything, but should treat it with compassion. Brumberg writes of the nasty, anti-Semitic 'reptile press' which flourished in Nazi-occupied Poland. It should not be forgotten. There was definitely one sector of Polish opinion that was hostile to Jews, and there were certainly people around, as there would have been in Britain or America, who were willing to consume the filth. What Brumberg fails to mention is that all wartime newspapers in the Greater Reich were overseen by Nazi propagandists, all were controlled by Nazi-appointed editors, and all were subject to Nazi censors. They did not reflect public opinion as a whole, and were widely boycotted." On these and other scores, Davies concludes that the readers of *TLS* "have not been well served" by Brumberg's review. As best I can tell from the conflicting accounts, the most accurate way of putting it is that what happened in Jedwabne was part of the Nazi-directed extermination program, carried out in this case with the enthusiastic help of some Polish thugs. In this and similar tragedies, there is no place for making excuses. And the French maxim that "To understand all is to forgive all" must be firmly rejected. Just as surely, however, ethnic identity provides no license for slandering an entire people, as Mr. Brumberg does. As for Davies' point about Jewish collaboration with the Nazi exterminators, it is an exceedingly delicate subject, as Hannah Arendt discovered after publishing *Eichmann in Jerusalem.* But Davies is surely right: "The fundamental fact is that the totalitarian regimes could tempt or coerce members of any ethnic community to do their dirty work for them." The appropriate response is to be grateful that we do not live under such terror and, remembering those who did, to walk humbly with our God.

■ The planners of the painfully correct Chautauqua Institute in upstate New York almost certainly did not intend such a fitting combination. In a series of presentations on "The Phenomenon of Heroism," Alexander Sanger of Planned Parenthood, the grandson of Margaret Sanger, is scheduled for one day, followed the next day by Theodore Fenstermacher, the assistant prosecutor at Nuremberg.

■ More than two hundred Lutheran pastors participated in the ordination of out-of-the-closet lesbian Anita Hill (no, not *that* Anita Hill) at St. Paul-Reformation Church in St. Paul, Minnesota. In *Forum Letter*, Editor Russell Saltzman opines that this represents the "critical mass" that gay advocates have been working for, making it almost certain that no bishop or congregation will in the future pay a price in connection with the ordination of sexually active homosexuals. At the same time, very Protestant opponents in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) are successfully opposing the provision of the full communion agreement with the Episcopalians which requires that future Lutheran ordinations be brought within the orbit of what Episcopalians understand to be apostolic succession. It appears now that "exceptions" will be countenanced, even "planned," by the ELCA, thus threatening the Lutheran-Episcopal agreement spelled out in *Called to Common Mission.* Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold of the Episcopal Church has

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

written the ELCA, "Our church voted for *CCM* as it stands, we want *CCM* to work, and we believe that it can." The ELCA nonetheless approved a bylaw allowing for exceptions and will submit it to the churchwide assembly, where it stands a very good chance of passing. As for the matter of ordaining the homogenitally active, Saltzman believes it will not be brought to a vote by the churchwide assembly, where it would almost certainly lose. Rather, the practice is established as a fait accompli that effectively nullifies the standards that will remain officially on the books. Saltzman declares that "the ecclesial unity of the ELCA is at an end. . . . When official standards are regularly excepted, informal exceptions will swiftly become unofficially official. That means the ELCA is nearly over in all but form." As one of those Neuhaus Laws has it, When orthodoxy is optional, it will sooner or later be proscribed. As for whether the ELCA is at an end, one may paraphrase General MacArthur: "Old denominations never die . . ."

■ The judicial usurpation of politics you know about, but the judicial usurpation of sports? That, it would seem, is clearly what is in prospect with the Supreme Court's 7-2 ruling in *PGA Tour, Inc. v. Casey Martin* that the 1990 Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) gives Martin the right to ride a golf cart in tournaments. Here we have the Supreme Court overruling the PGA on the question of what does and does not belong to the essence of the game of golf, and only Justices Clarence Thomas and Antonin Scalia caught the sad humor of it. What's next? We don't have to guess. The National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, Self Help for Hard of Hearing People, and the Dwarf Athletic Association were among organizations entering briefs for Martin. In progressive circles it has been argued for decades that sports violate the principle of equality because they are competitive. It is not entirely improbable that somewhere in those famous penumbras of the Constitution will soon be discovered a prohibition of competitive sports, at least when they result in there being winners and losers. Competition guaranteeing equal outcomes will likely pass constitutional muster.

■ This is very nice. *Christianity Today* has polled its large panel of judges and bestowed its annual book awards. Of the top twelve for the year, *Death on a Friday Afternoon* is listed as third. Whether that means it came in third, I don't know, but I'll accept the honor, gratefully. I note also that it is the only book in the top twelve that is not by an evangelical Protestant and is not from an evangelical publishing house. What does that say about *Christianity Today* and its judges? What does that say about me? How should I know?

■ I speculated some months ago that the reason there is no anxious chatter about who is going to run the *Village Voice* is that the *Times* has in recent years pretty much co-opted the countercultural turf that used to be commanded by the *Voice*. As though to complete the takeover, the *Times* has announced that, for the first time in history, it will publish (gasp) personal advertisements. Another paper, the *Observer*, gives us an idea of what to expect: "PORTNOY'S NOT COMPLAINING! Sixty-something DJM, writer, seeks buxom shiksa goddess under thirty for long discussions about self, constipation. Just looking for fun, but possible tragic romance. Must agree that: Bellow is overrated; Updike is goofy-looking. Have plenty of passports on hand for those last-minute impulse trips." The *Times* assures its readers that they will monitor for "taste." All the angst that's fit to print.

■ Dominican Father Paul Philibert addressing the National Federation of Priests' Councils in Baltimore: "Like Jesus, our ministry is not about doing things for other people, but empowering them to become—like the seventy-two disciples—evangelizers in the culture, in the economy, in the family, in the neighborhood, and in the world." As he said, "I have come neither to be served nor to serve, but to empower you."

■ Now she's gone and done it. She's been promising to for a long time, and I've been eagerly awaiting it. Midge Decter has written the story of her life. It's called *An Old Wife's Tale* and is published by Regan Books, a HarperCollins imprint (208 pp., $26). Of course I read with particular interest her account of the five years when she was distinguished fellow here at the Institute. Her account is generous and tender, although she is excessively self-deprecating about the contribution she made to FIRST THINGS. There was not a day that I was not grateful for her being with us, as I cannot imagine a day when I will not be grateful for her friendship. Starting out as a precocious child in St. Paul, Minnesota, determined to make it in New York, Midge's life has engaged most of the movements and arguments that have shaped and misshaped American life in the past half century. Especially the Cold War and the sundry feminisms that have come down the pike. One great merit of *An Old Wife's Tale* is to remind us of how long our cultural disorientations have been around. Midge still serves on our board, and at the annual meeting a while back another member was going on about how this development and that spelled defeat for all we cherish. Midge's succinct and utterly characteristic response: "It's never over." She is a master of polemics

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

touched by grace. Readers will remember her Erasmus Lecture, "A Jew in Anti-Christian America" (FT, October 1995). It took more than a little courage to make the case that the much traduced "religious right" is, all in all, also good for the Jews. But Midge is a person who makes courage seem like something that comes naturally. *An Old Wife's Tale*, however, is not only, is not even chiefly, about public battles. It is about being a woman, a mother, and a grandmother, all of which could not be without being a wife. She is married, as all the world knows, to Norman Podhoretz. She makes it sound easy, which to those who know Norman will come as something of a surprise. But then, there is an easiness to so much of Midge's way of being; a gratitude for so much good in life, if only we did not stupidly complexify it with crazy ideas and impossible attempts to live against the grain. She has many public achievements to her credit, and *An Old Wife's Tale* is not without an argumentative edge, but mostly it is the story of an enormously gifted woman who is enormously grateful. Which is why I cannot imagine a time when I will not be grateful for her friendship. And why many thousands of readers will, I am confident, give thanks for *An Old Wife's Tale*.

■ "We have learned that nature made us to ask big questions that have no answers," said the very bright college senior to her uncle. "Now why do you suppose nature would do that?" he asked. "I don't know. That's precisely my point. That's a big question that has no answer. Or at least we'll probably never know the answer completely. Nature is very mysterious." That's a fairly commonplace exchange. It or something very much like it is probably happening in some college dorm room at this very moment. Frederik Jozef Belinfante, who with Wolfgang Pauli did famous work on the statistical laws of electron interaction, said this: "If I get the impression that Nature itself makes the decisive choice what possibility to realize, where quantum theory says that more than one outcome is possible, then I am ascribing personality to Nature, that is, to something that is always everywhere. Omnipresent eternal personality which is omnipotent in making the decisions that are left undetermined by physical law is exactly what in the language of religion is called God." That striking observation is quoted in Jeffrey Satinover's new book, *The Quantum Brain* (Wiley). He also quotes the great English physicist Sir Arthur Eddington, who warned: "It would probably be wiser to nail up over the door of the new quantum theory a notice, 'Structural alterations in progress—No admittance except on business,' and particularly to warn the doorkeeper to keep out prying philosophers." Satinover, a contributor to these pages, is a prying psychiatrist of a philosophical bent who for some years now has been getting around the doorkeepers of scientific secrets that, as a matter of fact, are not so much secret as they are little noticed or little thought about by almost everyone except those who attend to them "on business." *The Quantum Brain* is an adventuresome book that, as they say, presses the envelope. The adventuresome George Gilder calls it "the first great book" of the twenty-first century. Satinover makes the science accessible, although it will provide a vigorous workout for the scientifically challenged. While looking forward to our review of the book, written by a scientist with a better command of the pertinent facts and theories, I feel confident in recommending *The Quantum Brain* to readers with a particular interest in the overlapping truths of physics, philosophy, and religion. I was going to stop there, but I cannot resist one more of the many elegant quotes with which the book is spiced. This is from Ambrose Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary* (1906): "Mind: A mysterious form of matter secreted by the brain. Its chief activity consists in the endeavor to ascertain its own nature, the futility of the attempt being due to the fact that it has nothing but itself to know itself with." As I say, we will be returning to the mysterious mind of Jeffrey Satinover exploring the transcendence of matter in ways that matter.

■ Here's a nice kind of problem to have. The kind you can do something about, at least if you have any influence with libraries or bookstores that do not carry FT. Especially university and college libraries (and sometimes departmental libraries), as well as parish libraries. The big book chains usually have FT, but then we get inquiries as to why some don't. In some cases, the answer is that they only carry a few copies and they're soon sold out. In others, we have no idea what the answer is. In all cases, the customer on the spot is in a good position to help rectify what is wrong. Many thanks.

■ The couple whose romance and flourishing marriage began when he sighted her reading FIRST THINGS in the college library may not be typical. But all kinds of good things can happen through FIRST THINGS connections. We will be happy to send a sample issue of this journal to people you think are likely subscribers. Please send names and addresses to FIRST THINGS, 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, New York, 10010 (or e-mail to subscriberservices@ pma-inc.net). On the other hand, if they're ready to subscribe, call toll free 1-877-905-9920, or visit www.firstthings.com.

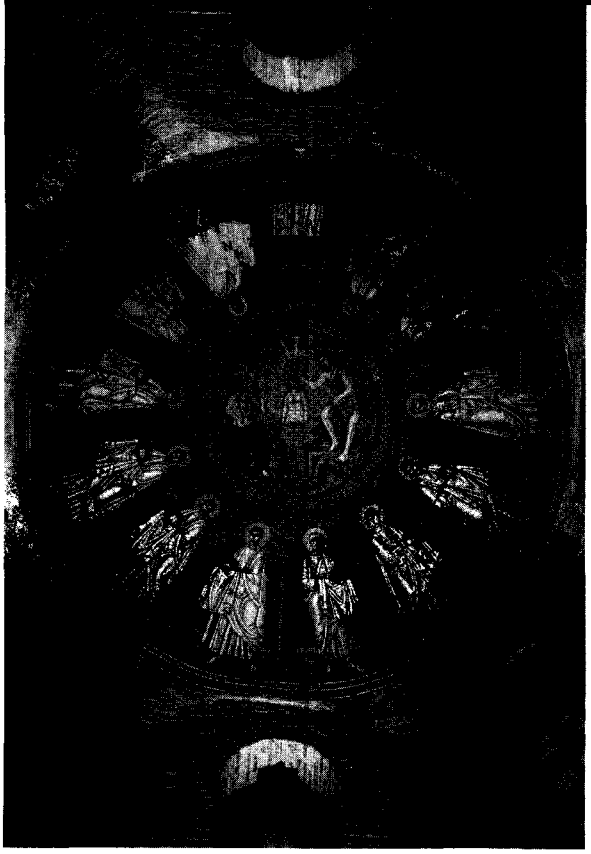
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Sources: "We Piped and You Did Not Dance," Anti-Defamation League ad, *New York Times*, May 13, 2001; Rabbi Daniel Lapin, Toward Tradition press release, May 14, 2001; Cragg Hines, *Houston Chronicle*, May 9, 2001; Bishop Joseph Fiorenza letter, *New York Times*, May 11, 2001; Eugene Fisher letter, *New York Times*, May 15, 2001; Walter Cardinal Kasper letter to Abraham Foxman, *Jewish Week*, June 8, 2001.

WHILE WE'RE AT IT: David Skinner on Dinesh D'Souza, *Public Interest*, Winter 2001. Mark Shields on the election, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, February 5, 2001. On Richard Wurmbrand, *Tablet*, March 3, 2001. Adam Michnik on Polish guilt, *New York Times*, March 17, 2001. Statistics on euthanasia in Oregon, *National Right-to-Life News*, March 2001. "The Pure American Woman and the Wicked Catholic Priest," *Religion and American Culture*, Winter 1999. Catholic violence in Africa, ZENIT, March 21, 2001. Dorothy Rabinowitz on school shootings, *Wall Street Journal*, March 9, 2001. Damon Linker on animal rights, *Commentary*, April 2001. Review of HBO film "Soldiers in the Army of God," *New York Times*, March 31, 2001. Marc Arkin review of *Wide as the Waters*, *Wall Street Journal*, April 4, 2001. David Berlinsky on information theory, *Commentary*, April 2001. Unitarian dustup, American Unitarian Association press release, April 5, 2001. On Barry Lynn's absolute shock, Americans United for the Separation of Church and State press release, April 17, 2001. John Lukacs on Catholic anti-Semitism, *Inside the Vatican*, March/April 2001. Terry Golway on double standards in public funding, *New York Observer*, April 16, 2001. German bishops on the Netherlands, SPUC Information, April 20, 2001. Richard Cohen on killing abortionists, *Washington Post*, April 24, 2001. CDF harassment, *America*, April 9, 2001. Gay book market, *Publishers Weekly*, April 23, 2001. Prayer at the Justice Department, *Washington Post*, May 14, 2001. Bullying study quoted in *Wall Street Journal*, April 30, 2001. Rod Dreher on John Paul II and the Orthodox, *Wall Street Journal*, May 8, 2001. On the Progressive Religious Partnership, *Christian Century*, April 18-25, 2001. Mark Tooley on Methodism, Institute on Religion and Democracy press release, May 8, 2001. Susan Martinuk on Canadian school standards, *National Post*, May 21, 2001. Jane Perlez on Africa policy, *New York Times*, May 31, 2001. Abraham Brumberg and Norman Davies on Jedwabne, *Times Literary Supplement*, May 4, 2001. Anita Hill ordination, *Forum Letter*, June 2001. On personal ads in the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, April 9, 2001. Father Paul Philibert on empowerment, *Catholic Trends*, April 14, 2001. German morality lessons, ProLife Infonet, May 25, 2001.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CHRISTIAN UNITY & THE DIVISIONS WE MUST SUSTAIN



A GATHERING OF TRADITIONAL CHRISTIANS II

NOVEMBER 8–10, 2001
UNIVERSITY OF ST. MARY OF THE LAKE
MUNDELEIN, ILLINOIS

IN THE SPIRIT OF our first "Gathering of Traditional Christians" at Rose Hill in South Carolina in 1995, *Touchstone* is pleased to announce a meeting of Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox Christians to examine together the issues that both unite and divide Christians in the 21st century.

A great realignment of Christians is under way as many rediscover the resources of the Great Tradition while others reject it wholesale. At the same time, Christians face difficult challenges from an increasingly secularized culture.

Meeting on the lovely grounds of the University of St. Mary of the Lake in north suburban Chicago, this conference will explore the possibilities for greater Christian unity and our responsibility for drawing all the lines—theological and moral—in the right places. A brochure containing registration, lodging, and scheduling information is now available. To be added to the conference mailing list, or to register for the conference, please e-mail Geoffrey Battersby (battersby@touchstonemag.com) or call toll-free 1-877-375-7373.

PLENARY SPEAKERS:

RICHARD J. NEUHAUS
That They May Be One:
The Prospects for Unity in the 21st Century

METROPOLITAN MAXIMOS
Turning Our Hearts to the Fathers:
The Orthodox Church & Christian Unity

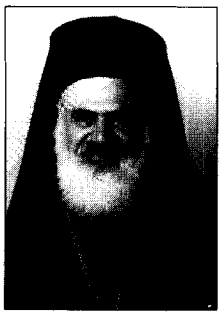
TIMOTHY GEORGE
The Unity of the Faith:
Evangelicalism & "Mere Christianity"

ROBERT P. GEORGE
The Family of God & Man:
Cultural Division & Christian Unity

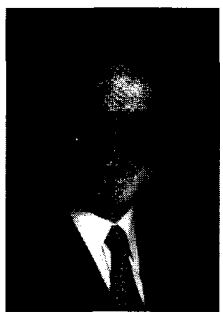
R. ALBERT MOHLER, JR.
Standing Together & Standing Apart:
Cobelligerency Without Theological Compromise

PATRICK HENRY REARDON
Communion & Division:
The Structure of Knowledge

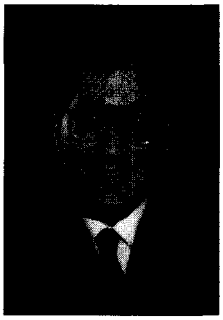
Richard J. Neuhaus



Metropolitan Maximos

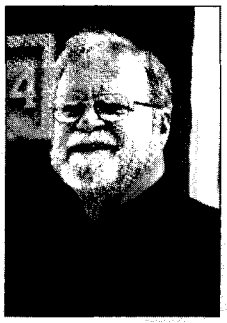


Timothy George



Robert P. George

R. Albert Mohler, Jr.



Patrick Henry Reardon

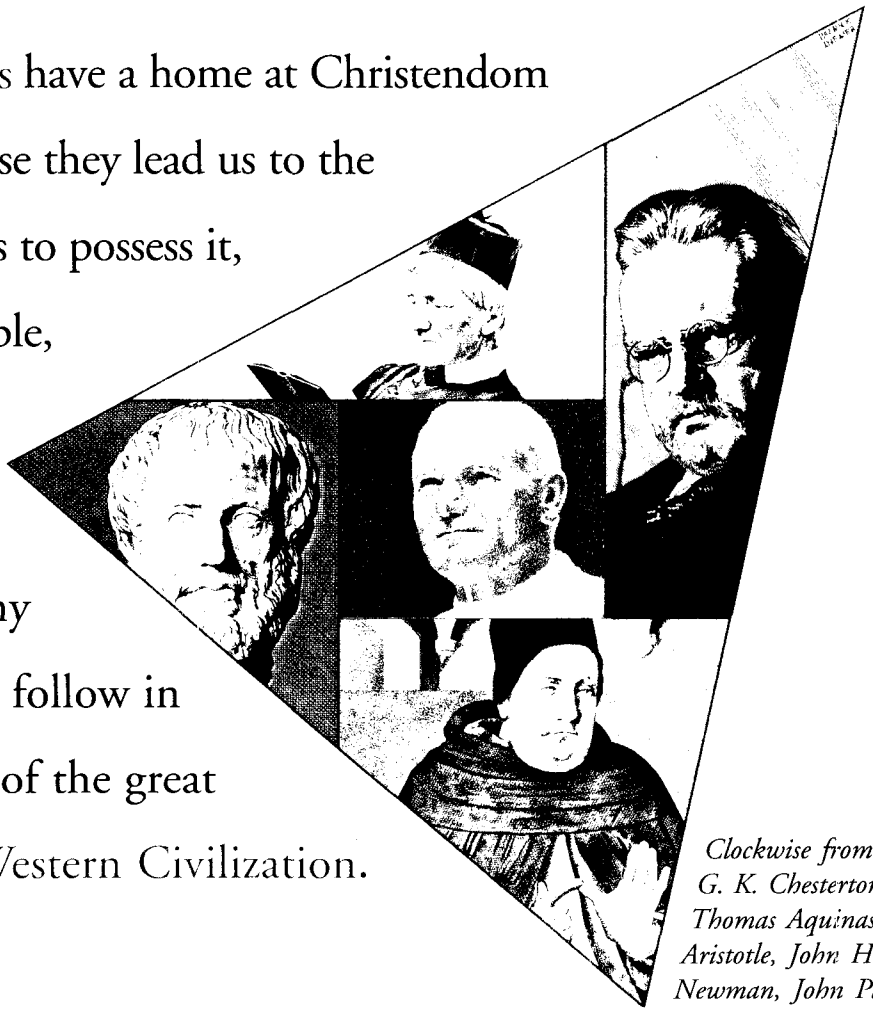
Sponsored by TOUCHSTONE: A JOURNAL OF MERE CHRISTIANITY • WWW.TOUCHSTONEMAG.COM

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

You Are Known by the Company You Keep . . .

These thinkers have a home at Christendom College because they lead us to the truth, teach us to possess it, and, by example, encourage us to love it.

Keep company with us as we follow in the footsteps of the great thinkers of Western Civilization.



Clockwise from top right: G. K. Chesterton, Thomas Aquinas, Aristotle, John Henry Newman, John Paul II

For more information please contact:
Paul Heisler • Admissions Office • Christendom College
134 Christendom Drive • Front Royal, VA 22630 • (800) 877-5456
admissions@christendom.edu • www.christendom.edu

CHRISTENDOM COLLEGE

A ROMAN CATHOLIC COLLEGE

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED